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OR,

A Middy's Vengeance.

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AUTHOR OF "SEA RAIDER," "CABIN BOY'S
LUCK," "BOY REFUGEE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE MIDNIGHT MARRIAGE.

THE moon shone brightly down upon the shores of Chesapeake Bay, the waters sparkling like silver, as the waves crested in their roll landward, and the dew upon grass and trees, glittering like myriads of diamonds.

Cultivated fields stretch away from a cliff upon one side, and a sloping lawn and park on the other, far back toward the hills.

The lawn gently slopes to the shores of a

"OH, LORDY! WE CHASED A FOX AND CAUGHT A TIGER," GROANED ONE OF THE OUTLAWS,
AS HE HELD OUT HIS WRISTS FOR THE IRONS TO BE CLASPED UPON THEM.

small cove or inlet, with a heavily-wooded peninsula forming a barrier to cut off the wind and sea from the bay.

In this little harbor is a boat-house, a pier, and several sail and row-boats are anchored off-shore and drawn up upon the beach.

The cliff overlooks the bay, up and down for miles, and stands as one of the portals, as it were, to the little harbor.

There are a few trees growing on the cliff, a rustic arbor, seats, and back of it a lawn, through which winds a gravel path, runs back to a garden, with ornamental evergreens, rare exotics, arbors and beds of violets, geraniums and innumerable other flowers, their perfume filling the night air.

A mocking-bird sits in an *arbor vite* tree, trilling its notes to the moon, an owl hoots in the dark forest a quarter of a mile away, the surf breaks upon the shore, and these alone are the sounds that break the silence.

Beyond the flower-garden rises a grand mansion, with wings, a tower, and broad piazzas.

It is a lordly plantation home, and is known as Castle Kenyon, after the wealthy planter who dwells there with his daughter Kate, a beautiful maiden of nineteen, who, with her twin brother, King Kenyon, then in England attending a university, are the only children of the rich Marylander whose house has just been described.

Back of the mansion are the out-houses, stables and barns, and beyond, the quarters of the slaves, for I write of a time early in the present century.

Upon the night when the scene is presented to the reader three persons are standing beneath the shelter of the rustic arbor upon the cliff.

One is a young girl, whose loveliness of face and form even the moonlight distinctly reveals.

Another is a man of thirty perhaps, dressed in the uniform of a navy officer, and his form and face are striking.

The third is a priest, clad in the robes of his church.

The first two stood side by side, their hands clasped, the maiden with bowed head and trembling form, the man with head erect and a smile of triumph upon his face.

The priest confronts them, book in hand, the pages of which he turns toward the moonlight, that he may read therefrom.

"We are ready, father," said the sailor with some impatience of tone.

"And it is your wish to marry this man, my daughter?" asked the priest.

"I will marry him," was the low reply of the maiden.

The priest then read the marriage ceremony, the vows were said, and the midnight marriage ended.

Then away from the spot, more as though she were leaving an open grave, rather than coming from a scene of marriage, the maiden walked, her head bent low.

Not a kiss to seal the nuptial vows, not a grasp of the hand in farewell, only a low moan as though iron fetters had bound her for life, and the parting came.

Back along the gravel walk toward the grand plantation homestead went the maiden, and down the sloping lawn to the beach went the sailor and the priest.

A call from the officer and the boat came ashore, the two entered, and were rowed rapidly away to a small armed schooner lying at anchor a cable's length distant.

Once on board, the boat was drawn up to the davits, the sails were set, and the rakish little vessel sped away over the moonlit waters, the wind blowing out her sail full and revolving the black flag of the buccaneer floating at her peak.

CHAPTER II.

A PLOT TO AVENGE.

THERE were two men standing upon a point of land, putting out from the Brooklyn shore, and their gaze was turned upon a trim little schooner-of-war that lay off in the stream at anchor, about opposite what is now Canalstreet, New York.

"You say the boy is to start to-night?" asked one of the men of the other.

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me again just what you found out?"

"I found out, sir, that the schooner was going into the stocks to be overhauled thoroughly, and that the young midddy had invested his prize money in a new craft, that had been ordered for a Spanish Don whose estates are in the Indies; but the Don died, so the builder offered the little schooner for sale, and the midddy told him to finish her up for him."

"Now he is going down to his home, where he

lives on a farm somewhere near Montauk, I believe, and he is going to run down in a little cat-rig yawl he brought here, and which is a fleet goer."

"He starts to-night, and the boat is already stored with a number of good things and presents he is taking the home folks."

"And he goes alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! that is my chance to capture him and get my revenge for his breaking up our band on Sandy Hook."

"He certainly did break up the nest of the Hawks of the Hook, cap'n."

"Curses rest on him, yes! but I'll get revenge, and if these sleepless navy lads won't let me smuggle goods in peace, why I'll take to pirating," said the first speaker savagely.

"There's more gold in it, Cap'n Firefly."

"Yes, and more risk. As smugglers, unless we kill, we have a prison before us; but as pirates it is a rope-end, death and no mercy; but what say you to taking a crew and overhauling that boy?"

"I'll do it, sir."

"You can have his boat and booty, but I want his life, so mind you do not take that."

"I'll get Topmast Tom to help me, and we'll go in the yawl."

"Topmast Tom and you are not enough for that boy, for there's more man in him than in half a dozen fellows double his years."

"Take four others besides yourself, and then there can be no mistake, should he have company, and not go alone, as you say."

"Then, too, take the little twenty-five foot sloop, for the boy's boat is a fast one, you said, and you don't want a stern chase that will never reach."

"Now get your men, watch the boy depart, and sail in pursuit after he has been gone half an hour, for, of course, he goes down the Sound."

"Yes, cap'n, to Sag Harbor, for he don't live very far from there, I'm told."

"Where shall I bring the boy, sir, when I catch him?"

"To the Haunted Rookery on Kip's Bay, for I'll move there to-night."

"I'll bring him there before dawn, cap'n; if not, to-morrow night, for I do not care to risk it in sunshine."

"You are right, Roving Richard, and it behooves us to be cautious, for we are hunted like wolves now."

"But I'd risk much to capture that boy, as he broke up our band, captured nearly all of our little fleet, and raked in all the booty we had saved the past year; so I feel revengeful—Ah! there goes a yawl now, the other side of the schooner!"

"It is the midddy's cat-rig, sir, and he evidently stood in to the New York shore for something."

The man addressed as captain raised a glass to his eyes, and turned it upon the boat, which was running briskly along up East river, under pressure of a seven-knot breeze.

"It is the boy, Roving Richard, for I see the glitter of his buttons, as he runs near the stern ports of that clipper, and the light falls upon his uniform."

"Let me have the glass, cap'n," and Roving Richard turned it upon the passing sailboat.

"It's the midshipman, for I recognize the boat."

"And he is alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then get your crew and go after him with all haste. Has he not a single reef in his sail?"

"A double reef, sir, for he's a wide-awake sailor, and knows the wind will be very brisk when he strikes the Sound; besides, he has to go through Hell Gate, and prepares for it beforehand."

"I could almost wish he would go down in Hell Gate, did I not wish to see him die and thus satiate my vengeance upon him."

"But, be off, Dick, or you'll find hard work to overhaul yonder fleet yawl."

"Ay, ay, sir! I'll be in 'chase within half an hour, for the cat-rig does go, that is certain," and the speaker hastened away up the hillside, leaving his captain gazing after the flying yawl.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHASE BY MOONLIGHT.

"MATES, there's work to be done, and I divide the booty with you, though I get the lion's share of course," said Roving Dick, hastily entering a dilapidated old house not far from the Navy Yard in Brooklyn, and the grounds of which, now overgrown with weeds, had once

been very inviting, sloping as they did down to the waters of East river.

"What's up, Dick?" asked one of a group of a dozen or more men, who were seated around a table eating supper.

"Only a boy to capture for the captain, and I want four of you to go with me."

"A boy to capture?"

"Yes."

"And you want four besides yourself to take him?"

"Yes."

"How many has he backing him?"

"No one, he's alone."

"Dick, are you growing to be a coward in your old age?"

"No, but this hain't no common run of boys."

"Who is he?"

"You have heard o' Midshipman Dare?"

The question was answered by the looks of the men, for they showed plainly that they had heard of such a person.

"Well, he's the youth, and it's best to go ready for him, so as to make no mistakes."

"He's got a leave of a few weeks, until his schooner is ready for him to hunt us in, and he's going to spend the time with his folks down on the island, near Sag Harbor."

"He's just gone up the East river in a yawl, all alone, and it's loaded with the best he could get for those he loved, so now we'll follow in the Silent Slipper, and she'll overhaul him before he gets to the Sound, for I'd like to catch him this side the fort."

"So come, boys, we'll be off."

Selecting four of the men from the group, Roving Dick led the way from the old house, and down to the shore, where lay at anchor a pretty little sloop of three tons.

To get on board, raise sail and stand out into the stream was but the work of a few minutes, and then the sloop headed up East river, about half an hour after the cat-rig, with the midshipman at the tiller, had passed.

The wind was freshening, and a single reef had been taken in the mainsail, for at that early day, Hell Gate was a most dangerous place to pass, even under the guidance of a skillful pilot.

Dick was at the tiller, and the little sloop, Silent Slipper, as she was named, went swiftly along.

She seemed to carry out her name, gliding through the waters without a ripple.

Into the surging current she bounded, the spray almost blinding those upon her low deck, and after following the dangerous channel, the rocks of which had been fatal to so many gallant vessels, the little sloop glided out into the smoother waters beyond.

"That boy has nerve to run this gantlet alone, mates, for it takes a steady hand, quick eye, and pluck, if I say it myself, to go through Hell Gate," said Roving Dick.

"It does take just that, Mate Dick, and the midddy has all three in a great quantity."

"But my eyes are too full o' salt water to see if there's a sail ahead," said a grizzly old sailor.

"I see a sail ahead, and it's the yawl, fully a league away," called out another of the men, with a glass to his eye.

"Yes, and we'll have all we can do to overhaul him before daybreak, for that yawl is a flyer," remarked Dick, and, as a few moments more showed that the sloop was not overhauling the yawl as rapidly as he hoped, he ordered the reef shaken out.

This sent the Silent Slipper swiftly along, for the wind was fresh and increasing in strength each moment.

"We're gaining, Dick."

"Oh yes, we'll run alongside o' him by the time we reach the open water of the Sound, mates; but mind you, the boy is not to be hurt, for the cap'n wishes him alive and hearty, to carry out his own ideas regarding his going out of life."

"Do you hear, lads, no harming the boy!"

"Suppose he shows fight?"

"He'll do that, and don't you go to thinking he won't; but he'll have to do the fighting, not us."

"He may shoot."

"He will shoot, but we've got to risk that."

"They say he's a bad hand with a cutlass, too."

"He is, as I know, for I've seen him in action, lads, the night he took the Hook Hawks' nest so clever; but we've got to take the chances against him, and five men ought to get away with one boy."

"Some o' us will get hurt, for I feels it," muttered one.

"Yes, it will doubtless be; perhaps me, perhaps some o' you; but we're not to hurt the

boy, and the man that does goes overboard with a broken head, so you all understand, lads."

A murmur of assent was the answer, and the men watching the yawl saw that the sloop gained rapidly, as the smaller vessel reached the larger waters of the Sound.

Straight on his course held the youth at the tiller of the little boat, apparently not knowing that the one astern was in chase.

The moon shone brightly down upon the scene, and the wind, blowing a twenty-mile-an-hour breeze, raised a choppy sea.

Nearer and nearer drew the sloop, and the middy seemed not to even know the clipper was astern.

She appeared to creep upon her prey as a cat might, and her crew lay well out to windward, for she was running scuppers under, and heeling badly when an extra heavy squall struck her.

"Ah! he sees us!" cried Roving Dick, as the yawl suddenly luffed sharp.

"Yes, and is waiting for us."

"Not he! Do you not see him cutting loose his reefing nettles?"

"By Jupiter! but he is! and the yawl will run under if he attempts to carry all sail on her in this blow," and the crew of the sloop narrowly watched the yawl, which was now not more than a third of a mile from them.

Up to the mast-head went the full sail, the creaking of the blocks reaching the ears of the men on the sloop as the middy drew on the hal-yards.

Then, letting her fall off on her course once more, and taking his seat up to windward, steering with a rope about the tiller, the brave middy took the chances of running his boat under, for he seemed to feel that the craft in his wake was in pursuit of him.

CHAPTER IV.

AT BAY.

It was an exciting scene, as the two small sail-boats went careening over the moonlit waters, roughed by the half-gale that was blowing.

The yawl appeared to be a stanch boat, for she carried her sail strangely well, cutting through the waves and standing up well as though laden deeply.

The youth at her helm kept her well off-shore, as though disdaining to seek the smoother waters under the shelter of the land, and he held her straight on her course.

Of course, in that rough sea the larger boat held the advantage, and could but gain upon the smaller one; but it made those on board feel anxious for their safety, as she drove along threatening one moment to run under, and the next to capsize, so far did she heel over under the tremendous pressure upon her.

The pursuers were perfectly astounded at the behavior of the yawl, and the pluck of the boy, and Roving Dick said:

"You'd think he knew that death was in his wake, lads, and preferred to drown rather than be taken."

"But he cannot know who we are, and merely wishes not to be overhauled by us, fearing trouble, for suspicious boats are numerous in these waters now."

"What will the captain do with him when we take him?" asked one.

"Kill him," was the laconic response.

"Well, the boy better run the yawl under, and let it be his coffin, rather than fall into Cap'n Firefly's grip, for he's a man who has no mercy for an enemy."

"You are right, Topmast Tom; but I guess the yawl carries good booty, for she stands up like a church steeple, and staggers less than does the Slipper, as you see."

"Will you board him, Mate Dick?"

"Yes; I'll hail, ordering him to lay to, and then run up and board."

"If he don't obey?"

"Then I shall run along to leeward, cast a grapple, let you keep the helm, Topmast Tom, while the rest of us spring on board the yawl, and three of us can manage him, while you, Ned, jump for the yawl's tiller, and luff sharp, while Tom does the same on the sloop."

"This is a hard wind to cut up capers in with small boats, mate."

"Yes, and a worse sea."

"Well, we've got to take the boy, and if Ned and Tom do their duty right, we'll do ours, and there'll be no trouble or danger," said the leader.

All the party stood ready to obey orders, for the yawl was now not more than a hundred feet away.

And on over the moonlit, foam-crested waves they flew, the sloop steadily gaining on the chase.

As for the midshipman, after having shaken out his reef, he seemed to feel that he had done all that he could to escape, and he sat up to windward, calmly watching the behavior of his boat, and now and then glancing astern at the sloop.

"I see the glitter of the moonlight upon his buttons, now, with the naked eye," Topmast Tom remarked.

"So do I, and I'll hail soon," was Roving Dick's response, and a few moments after, he made his way forward.

Standing to windward, his hand grasping a stay, he shouted:

"Ho, the yawl, ahoy!"

"No answer came, and he repeated:

"Ahoy! ahoy, the yawl!"

"He don't even turn his head," whispered Ned.

"Ho, that yawl!" shouted Roving Dick for the third time.

Still no answer.

"Ho, the yawl, ahoy! Lay to or I will fire into you!"

But the yawl held on her way as though her helmsman was both deaf and blind.

"Once more, ahoy!" yelled Roving Dick.

"Ahoy, the sloop!" came back in a clear, manly voice.

"What yawl is that?" demanded Roving Dick, anxious to gain time and to get still nearer.

"This yawl is the Unknown, out of New York, bound on a pleasure cruise, and her skipper does not wish to be meddled with," came the reply, sharp and to the point.

"Well, you are suspected of being a smuggler, so lay to and we'll board you."

"By what authority?"

"We are Government officers."

"I do not believe you."

"Boy, do you dare officers of the Government?"

"Oh, no, for I am one myself, and I warn you to keep on your way and not to molest me."

"We intend to carry out our orders."

"And what are they?"

"To capture that yawl."

"Why do you not board me, then, and carry out your orders? Here I am, so come and take me!" was the defiant challenge.

"Ha! do you intend to resist?"

"I warn you I shall not allow any cut-throats to board my vessel without resisting them."

"Well, board you we will, so I warn you not to resist!"

"Give me your authority."

"We are Government officers."

"Your names?"

"It matters not."

"It does to me; but what is your duty?"

"To arrest you."

"Then do your duty."

The coolness of the youth dazed the outlaws, and after a moment Roving Dick called out:

"Who are you?"

"Duncan Dare, midshipman of United States navy. I am not ashamed of my name, as you are."

"This is too much, sir, and I will teach you a lesson in politeness."

"Helmsman, do your duty!" cried Roving Dick, from forward, and the sloop's bows began to hug the wind closer and closer, and at the same time the yawl, holding straight upon her course, the two boats drew nearer and nearer together.

Still the youth did not move from his seat to windward, except to grasp a pistol in his right hand, while he still held the rope, about the tiller head, in his left.

"I warn you off, for I will fire!" cried the midshipman, as the bowsprit of the sloop was pointing at the mast of the yawl.

"Luff more at the helm, there! and Ned, stand ready to leap aboard and take the tiller while you, Jonah, throw the grapnels!" ordered Roving Dick.

A moment more and the bows of the sloop were just over the lee quarter of the yawl.

"Keep off, I warn you!" cried the midshipman, at bay.

"Throw your irons and we'll board and take the middy!" shouted Roving Dick, and, as he uttered the words and Jonah raised his hands to obey, there came a flash, a report, and Jonah fell back upon the deck, still grasping the irons in his dying grip.

"Cast grapnels!" came in the voice of the midshipman, and, suddenly, over the combing of the yawl appeared half a dozen forms; two forward gave a swing of their arms and grapnels

left their hands, falling across the deck of the sloop.

They seemed to rise like magic. Several flashes and sharp cracks followed their appearance, and, with a groan, and a cry of alarm, two more of the sloop's crew went down.

"Luff sharp as I do, sir, or you are a dead man!" shouted the midshipman!" addressing Topmast Tom who was at the sloop's helm, and that worthy promptly obeyed, the two boats swinging up into the wind as though upon one pivot.

"Now, vagabonds, you are my prisoners!" cried the midshipman, relinquishing the tiller to a seaman, and leaping upon the deck of the sloop, a pistol in one hand, a cutlass in the other.

"Quarter! quarter!" shouted the remaining outlaws in stentorian tones, and thus the chase ended with the biters being bitten, for, when brought to bay, the daring young midshipman had been more than a match for those who had expected to make him their game.

"Oh, Lordy! we chased a fox and caught a tiger," groaned one of the outlaws, as he held out his wrists for the irons to be clasped upon them.

CHAPTER V.

THE MIDSHIPMAN'S RETURN.

"MOTHER, here I am, happy as a schoolboy on a holiday, for I have two weeks leave, and nothing to do but to be with you all that time," and Duncan Dare threw his arms about the neck of a beautiful woman who seemed scarcely twenty-five years of age, so lightly had time dealt with her.

"Oh, Duncan! my noble boy, how you startled me, and how did you get here?" cried the widow Dare, as the country folk called the handsome young mother of the gallant middy.

"I meant to surprise you, mother, but not to startle you; but I ran down to Sag Harbor in my own boat, and drove over from there, and I have so much to tell you, I don't know how to begin."

"First tell me how you like the new home I have built, on the ashes of the one which that wicked man, Carl, the Corsair, burned down to avenge himself on you?"

"Mother, this home don't look much as though he had avenged himself, for it is grand."

"Why, it's as fine as the Squire's; but that reminds me—how is the Squire?"

"Jessie, you mean, for it's one word for the Squire and two for his daughter, your little sweetheart, Duncan," said widow Dare, with a sly smile.

"Yes, mother, I meant Jessie too."

"Both are well, and the Squire says my home is finer than his."

"It is a lovely place, mother; but I liked the dear old homestead, with its shingle sides, and can never forget it."

"Still, you have built a fine house for us, dear mother, and one of these days, when I get to be a decrepit old admiral, I hope to come here to spend my latter days."

"You are looking a long ways ahead, my son."

"Yes, for a middy of sixteen to be talking of being an admiral, a rank few men get until their three-score years have passed; but, mother, I am stepping up, for I shall be put in command of a little cruiser in two weeks."

"You?"

"Yes, mother."

"Oh, Duncan! what a fearful responsibility." "True, mother, but I'll not be cut loose from a superior officer, for the craft I will command will be as it were, a tender to the Spitfire, which schooner Captain Burton is to command, for he has been promoted, and well he deserves it."

"You wrote me of him, in fact your letters are full of Captain Beverly."

"He is such a splendid fellow, mother, and I owe much to him, for he pushes me to the front all the time, sends me as bearer of important reports of service done, and mentions me most highly."

"You see I introduced him to Miss Kate Kenyon, and he's hull down in love with her, struck his colors to her, got his guns silenced by her, and she sailed to windward of him, leaving him a wreck."

"Oh, Duncan! what do you mean by all those nautical expressions?"

"She refused him, mother; but he does not bear me any ill-will for it, as he knows I worked hard to have him win."

"She is the one who was engaged to Carl, the Corsair, when he was a naval officer?"

"Yes, mother, she saved Captain Carl Casan-

dra's life, and his vessel and crew; and she really loved him devotedly; but then he had a bad heart, was a gambler, went to the bad, wrecked his reputation and turned pirate.

"Then he kidnapped, her, and, as you know, when I was a cabin boy on his ship, at the time I ran away from home and got into a den of thieves by mistake, Miss Kate and myself escaped together."

"You rescued her, you mean?"

"Well, I helped her, I admit, and she went home, and did not marry an old fellow, a South Carolina planter, her father's boyhood chum, as he wished her to, and now she has refused Captain Beverly."

"Poor girl, hers has not been a happy lot."

"Still, mother, she does not mope, for she's a brave little woman; but I wish she would marry my captain."

"So do I; but you wrote me how Captain Carl died."

"Yes, mother, when we sighted the Spitfire, she was in the Chesapeake, and I feel confident that Captain Carl had tried to again kidnap Miss Kenyon, as she admitted to me she had seen him, though begged me not to speak of it, and I only do so to you, mother."

"We put the Vidette in fighting trim, chased the Spitfire right to the harbor of Castle Kenyon Plantation, and Captain Carl ran in alongside the cliff."

"We followed with the Vidette and it was a hot fight we had."

"Oh, my son, what dangers you have been exposed to."

"A sailor's fortune, mother; but when Captain Carl heard his men cry for quarter, he ran up the ratlines, out upon the yard, and would have jumped upon the cliff; but I had seen his act, and following him close, he had to turn and face me."

"He clung to the yard-stay, and I to a severed rope, and he disarmed me; but before he could cut me down with his cutlass, I swung off at the end of my rope, and Captain Carl turned to fly, when who should confront him but Miss Kenyon, pistol in hand, and he sprang into the sea and was lost."

"Are you sure, Duncan, for somehow that pirate chief never dies when people say so?"

"We could not find him, mother, and he surely died."

"I hope so, for I have lived in dread of his seeking revenge on you."

"No, mother, I was avenged, not he, for we got his schooner, the booty on board, and his crew, and sailed for New York, where we also had a successful affair, as I found in a secret drawer in the Spitfire's cabin, some letters that let me into a secret about the way to get to the retreat of the smuggler band known as the Hawks of the Hook."

"We surprised them at night in their den, and though their captain, Firefly, escaped with a few men in a sail-boat they ran out to sea through the surf, we got their booty and a large number of prisoners, while, upon my return to the Horseshoe, where I had left Captain Beverly with the schooner, I discovered that he had taken the smugglers' little fleet of sloops all but one vessel that got away."

"It was to make this report that Captain Beverly sent me to Washington, as he did also when the capture of the Spitfire was made."

"My prize-money, mother, I put to use and bought a small schooner, that was being built for a Spaniard, and it is that craft I am to go as the commander of, to sail in company with the Vidette."

"But, as I have to wait for her, I got leave, and I bought a yawl as a present to Squire Hampton, as I knew he wanted a boat, and I loaded her with presents—for you, Jessie, the Squire and others, which I reserved from the booty I had."

"You are very good, my son, and we will all appreciate your gifts."

"But, mother, I saw a fellow dogging my steps, when I bought the yawl and loaded her, and having an idea that I was to be followed, I asked Captain Beverly to let me have a midshipman and half a dozen tars, to sail with me."

"I put them in the bottom of the yawl, and they proved good ballast, in the blow I had, and soon I saw I was pursued."

"Well, I stood on down the Sound, the sloop gaining all the time on me, and at last they attempted to board, believing me all alone."

"But I sprang a trap on them with Midshipman Mark Manly, and his tars, and captured the sloop and her crew, who were some of the Hawks of the Hook."

"I gave the yawl to Middy Manly to return in, with the prisoners, and brought the sloop on

as a present to the Squire, mother, for she's a beauty, and fast as a bird."

"So here I am with two weeks' leave to enjoy your society, and revel in old Liza's hot muffins and delicious cooking, for a middy is always hungry, mother, as you will discover when you know me better."

Mrs. Dare laughed heartily at her son's remark, and soon after the old negress, Liza, came to call them in to supper, when Duncan gave proof of his assertion as to his hunger.

Thus the days passed joyously away to the handsome, daring young midshipman, in his home on Long Island; and in seeing her son happy—in riding, boating and driving with pretty Jessie Hampton, the only child of Squire Hampton, the richest and greatest man in the county—the widow was happy, too, for well she knew what a life of peril and danger was before him in his life on the ocean wave.

CHAPTER VI.

A GLANCE AT THE BY-GONE.

As widow Dare gazed at her son, as the two were seated together that night of his return, in the cosy sitting-room, a silence having fallen between them, she could not refrain from casting a glance of retrospection over the by-gone years and all that they had brought to her of sorrow and joy.

She recalled how, one dark and tempestuous night, a vessel was wrecked upon that wild Long Island coast, and she, a daring girl of sixteen, had gone out in her surf-skiff and rescued one, a dashing, handsome man, saving him from death.

He had won her heart, though she knew nothing of his antecedents, and she had become his wife.

One day he had sailed in a noble ship, and never had he returned, for the vessel had gone down into the ocean depths, it was said, and the sea had taken from her her husband, leaving, though, his image in his son.

Many had wooed the beautiful widow in vain, until at last an old schoolmaster, also a man who had been wrecked upon the coast, had obtained a strange influence over her, and she had consented to become his wife.

This, Duncan, young as he was, arose in arms against, a quarrel with the schoolmaster followed, the boy was mercilessly flogged before the school, receiving it without a murmur, and that night Duncan Dare had fled from his home, bearing the cruel scars of the man upon his back and shoulders.

He had swum out to a schooner he had seen at anchor off-shore, and she had proven to be a pirate that had come to the coast to seek a buried treasure, hidden years before by a sea rover known as Royal the Rover.

The pirates had gone inland and the schoolmaster had met his death at their hands, while Duncan Dare, having gone, was branded as his murderer, and the hounds of the law were put upon his track.

A friend of the schoolmaster soon after was murdered—it was upon a second landing of the pirates, and which no one knew of and the circumstances of his death were such that it pointed toward widow Dare as the guilty one, and she was accused.

But back again came her noble boy, wearing a midshipman's rank, and he had captured the pirate vessel and crew, and those who had accused both mother and boy bent their heads in humble remorse, for it was plain who had slain the schoolmaster and his old companion, and that the motive of the pirates was to force from them the secret of the buried treasure.

Then the widow Dare had told her son why it was that she had been influenced by the murdered schoolmaster, for he came to her with the bold assertion that her husband had been a pirate chief, and threatened to make it known to all, if she did not consent to become his wife.

In despair she promised, hoping to keep from all ears the dread secret that her son's father had been a buccaneer.

The boy had heard, but scouted the idea, and he alone of all, believed that his father was not dead, and yet would return.

Then the youth went forth in his new career, to win fame and honor, and he had come again to his home, to her side, to tell her all he had done.

All these things passed through the widow's mind, as the two sat there in silence together, and she silently prayed that it might indeed be true that the wicked man, her son's worst foe, Captain Carl the Corsair, might indeed be dead, and that Duncan Dare's belief that his father's being yet alive might indeed prove true, so that he might come back to her who had so dearly loved

him, and by his own words remove the stain upon his name, which Silas Finn, the dead schoolmaster had cast there.

Could it be that he would one day come?

Could it be that Captain Carl was indeed dead?

At least widow Dare fondly prayed that the corsair was dead, and that her husband yet lived, and some day would appear, as though from the grave.

CHAPTER VII.

A MYSTERIOUS PERSONAGE.

IN a dingy little room, of an old and dilapidated brick house, which had once been an extensive dwelling, sat a man of remarkable appearance.

The house was in the, then, upper part of New York city in the neighborhood of what is now Canal street, and it stood not far from the waters of the East river.

It had once been a farm-house, then a country seat, and next had been given up to the pressure of advancing business that steadily marched up the river shores.

An inn not far away, some small farm-houses, on the street bordering the river, a few stores, blacksmith shop, and warehouses were near, a straggling continuation of the city that was rapidly growing into marvelous importance.

Several piers were near, some shipping moored against them, or anchored in the stream, and by day the scene was a busy one; by night it was dreary and almost deserted.

In one of the rooms of the old building sat the man that I have referred to.

He was tall, broad-shouldered, sinewy in form, and wore his black hair and beard long, the latter reaching to his waist, and the former falling upon his shoulders in waving locks.

He had large dark eyes, looked like a man of fifty, and his face, the part visible above his beard was strongly marked and sinister.

He sat in a small room, filled with books and papers, and doors opened into other chambers in which were piled up a number of miscellaneous articles, from a ship's anchor to a wagon harness.

The man sat at his desk, a pen in his hand, and now and then a knock would come upon the door.

In answer to a request to enter, always declined in a squeaky kind of tone, in strange contrast to the physique of the strange-appearing person, a man in half-sailor half-landsmen garb would appear and deposit some money on the desk, with the stereotyped remark about certain sales having been just made.

The old merchant, for as such he was known, examined the list of articles sold, counted the money brought in, and then, in his squeaky voice would say something about its being too little return for so much merchandise.

The clerk, an old, weazen-faced man, would answer:

"It was all I could get, Mr. Marks, and more than they were worth," and back to his stand outside he would go, to catch other customers.

The long-bearded merchant was considered rich, was known to be a miser, and hard man to deal with; but he seemed to keep, stored away in the old house something that everybody wanted, and his business was prosperous.

No one ever saw Marks far from his domicile, though he went out on a pilgrimage monthly to the city to get more goods, it was said, and to collect his rents, for the rooms of the large and rambling old structure, facing on the rear street, were let out to "lodgers," of whom there were perhaps a dozen, ranging from the humble fisherman, to a swell individual about whom there hung a mystery that the gossips could not fathom, any more than they could the antecedents of the old miser merchant.

Looking up at an old clock on the mantle, the man saw that it was six o'clock, and he gave a long, shrill whistle.

In answer the old clerk put in an appearance. "Jenks, I am going to my room now, so look after things," he said.

"Yes, sir," answered Jenks, as was his daily custom, and rising, and using a stout cane as a support, Marks passed out through an adjoining room, that was very large, and filled with articles enough of various kinds to make a curiosity-shop of it.

Crossing the room to a stout door, Marks took a key from his pocket and opened it.

A narrow hallway was revealed, lighted by a pane of glass in the ceiling.

The hall was some twenty feet in length, and at the other end was another stout door.

This, too, was opened by a key, and the man entered a bed-chamber.

It was oddly furnished, looked like half-office,

half-sleeping-room, had but one window in it, and this had an iron grating outside, and looked out into a kind of court of the old building.

Heavy curtains hung at one side of the window, a bed was in one corner, and upon a large, open fire-place were cooking-utensils, some wood, and to one side a cupboard and table, showing that the occupant did his own cooking.

The place looked miserly in the extreme.

An easy-chair was near the window, standing by a table upon which were various odds and ends, with quill pens, ink, wafers and other bundles of letters.

Throwing himself into the easy-chair, the miser took out of his pocket a letter, which he opened and read, the seal having already been broken.

"Well, this is strange indeed."

"That man Captain Carl kidnapped the girl after all, and she did not willingly run off with him."

"I do not think my agent in Baltimore can be mistaken, for he is pretty thorough."

"Let me read again what he says," and the squeaky voice was dropped for one that was rich of tone and by no means unpleasant, as was the shrill voice he had before spoken in.

Then he read aloud:

"The lady did not go, as you believe, willingly with Captain Carl, but was kidnapped by him, and he wanted to force her into marrying him by keeping her on board his schooner."

"There was a youth on board, it seems, one Duncan Dare by name, who aided her to escape, and he it was who afterward captured Captain Carl's schooner and crew, though the chief escaped."

"The lady returned to her father and is living there now, and when Captain Carl recaptured his schooner, he went to the Chesapeake once more with the evident intention of again running off with the lady."

"The boy, however, who had been a middy, and was an officer on the schooner-of-war Vidette, once more thwarted him. It seems, for the cruiser followed the pirate, attacked him, ran him to the little plantation harbor of Castle Kenyon and there defeated him, Captain Carl springing into the sea from aloft, where he had retreated, and it was said, being badly wounded, he drowned immediately."

"Certain it is that the maiden is free, happy in knowing that Captain Carl her pirate lover is no more, and you can now act as you deem best, being in possession of these facts."

"Well, this is good news," said the miser, after he had read the letter.

"And I will act, for I love Kate Kenyon, and she shall be my wife."

"Her father dare not refuse me, for I hold him powerless, in that he secretly married my step-sister, and believes her to be living, and would not have the secret of his first marriage known for the world."

"It was the one wrong act of Cyle Kenyon's life, to desert his first wife; but he did it, and while he believed her dead by her own hand he married Kate Kenyon's mother."

"Now he believes that his first wife lives, as I told him she did, in a mad-house, and he will not dare say aught to my marrying his daughter."

"No, no, for he urged it at my request, knowing, if he did not wish me for a son-in-law, that my request was equivalent to my demand."

"So, I will soon go down to Castle Kenyon, and the fair lady shall become my bride, and then I will be content to settle down and live wholly in luxury my remaining days."

"Now to go to the hotel," and the man arose and walked over to the large fire-place.

Stepping upon the hearth, where the cupboard stood, that piece of furniture suddenly rolled to one side, as though on a slide, leaving an aperture like a door.

Stooping, the man entered a walled-in passageway, and taking a lantern from a swinging nail he lighted it.

Then the cupboard was brought back in place, and Marks traversed the passage for some fifty feet, when he came to an iron-barred door.

This he opened, and he was in a large sitting-room, adjoining to which was a bed-chamber.

Both were most comfortable, luxuriously furnished, with soft carpets, Persian rugs, and the windows, overlooking a yard that ran out to a street, were hung with heavy silk curtains.

Other rooms connected, and a door opened into a hallway, descending by carpeted stairs, to a front portal that led out into the yard.

Having entered the room Marks at once began to disrobe himself, placing the clothing he took off away in a secret drawer.

Out of a bureau he took a suit of most fashionable clothing, then a watch and chain, some rings and a bosom pin, set with rare gems, a pair of patent-leather boots, a stylish hat and a cane with a handle of gold.

One watching him at that time would have been astounded to see him suddenly take off a wig and remove a beard, showing that both were false.

His face was clean shaven, and every feature pronounced in expression and handsome.

His hair was a dark brown and worn short, and he looked scarcely forty years of age, and was certainly of most *distingue* appearance, when he had dressed himself in the fashionable attire.

Taking his cane he then left the rooms and the house, wending his way by the street down into the busy part of the city.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. MARKS'S VISITOR.

SEVERAL days after the introduction of the strange personage, Marks, to the reader, that worthy was seated in his dingy little office, engaged in writing, when Jenks came in and said:

"A party to see you."

"Who?"

"Don't know, but have seen him before."

"Show him in!"

Jenks departed, while Marks opened his desk drawer and drew a pistol lying within reach more readily to his hand.

A moment after a man came in whose appearance was that of a sailor, and one who had been accustomed to command.

He was dressed as a captain of the merchant sea service, and had a bold face, full of resolution and intelligence.

"Mr. Marks, I am glad to see you again," he said in a blunt way.

"Firefly, as I live!" cried Marks.

"Yes, Captain Firefly, Mr. Marks, only I do not mention the name except in a whisper, or hail under it now, for I am plain Captain Jack Deadnought, at your service, and I'm in hard luck."

"I heard of your ill fortune, and, as I did not see you, feared you were dead."

"No, sir, I turn up in time out of all trouble."

"But I hoped to get on my feet again, and finding I could not do so unaided, I came to you."

"Luck has gone hard with me of late, and sticks to me too, for I thought I had the boy, to whom I owe my misfortune, in my power, as he sailed I believed alone, when lo, he captures my men and sloop sent to capture him."

"Now I'm ashore, with one small craft only, about a couple of dozen good men, all hiding like rats in holes, and no money."

"You are in bad luck, Firefly."

"Captain Deadnought, sir, is my name."

"Bah! no one is near, and these walls have no ears."

"Come, what do you want?"

"Money!"

"What for?"

"To buy a cruiser with, arm her, and fit her out."

"What do you want with a cruiser for smuggling?"

"I'll try piracy awhile, for my neck's in the noose now, so I don't care, and if the risks are greater the profits are larger."

"Well?"

"I come to you for gold."

"On what terms?"

"You wish a certain interest?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"One-third for your officers and crew, one-third for yourself, and the other third for me."

"A big interest, Mr. Marks."

"And big risks I take, for you may be captured and hanged before I get a dollar."

"True, so I'll accept your offer."

"How much do you want?"

"All of forty thousand."

"Have you a boat in view?"

"Yes, sir."

"And armament?"

"Yes."

"And crew?"

"I have a chance to get good men."

"When do you want the money?"

"Now."

"Sign this paper and partnership."

Marks wrote a few lines, and Captain Firefly signed it.

"Jenks will give you the money; but what are you to be known as?"

"Firefly, the Buccaneer."

"Sign that name also to this paper."

The pirate obeyed, and then taking the order for the money was leaving the room when Marks called out:

"When do you sail?"

"Within ten days, I hope."

"Good! the sooner the better."

"So I think."

"I suppose you know that Captain Carl the Corsair is dead?"

"Yes, I heard so, and am sorry, for he seemed to be a nice fellow."

"He was; but an idea strikes me?"

"Well?"

"Suppose you take his name."

"Ha! a good idea, and it will cause me to be feared by the small cruisers, for he has the name of a desperate fighter."

"So he had, and you had better take his name."

"I'll do it."

"Then sign his name to this paper, and make it 'Captain Carl, the Ocean Firefly.'"

"You are full of good ideas, Marks, for that gives me my name with his, and I'll call my vessel Firefly."

"Now get your money, and if you should need more, call on me."

"Thank you," returned the pirate, as he left the dingy room, and when he got his money, he said:

"Well, I'll need more, for I might as well have fifty as forty thousand, as I have to pay for it so large an interest; but I'll not be the one to buy a schooner and her armament, when I can cut out either the Spitfire or the Vidette, and either will suit me, and I'll save my money for myself, laying it away for a rainy day, or turn of fortune."

"Now to see just how to get one of those vessels, and it will sound well, to hear Captain Carl is again afloat, and not dead, as was supposed."

"Captain Carl, the Ocean Firefly, is a good name, I declare, and it will be heard of at sea before very long, and once I am afloat again I'll not forget what I owe Midshipman Duncan Dare in the way of revenge."

"No, I'll strike quick and hard at him," and the pirate's eyes fairly blazed with hatred as he thought of the daring young midddy.

CHAPTER IX.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

So totally different was Marks in his dingy business office from what he was when freed of his disguise, that no one would for a moment suspect that he was one and the same man.

Mr. Marks was a strange character, living a double life, with no one knowing him as other than he appeared, according to his humor to serve as a gentleman or miser.

That he had underhand dealings the reader has seen, through his compact with Captain Firefly, the smuggler; but his tracks were so well covered up, that were he to be caught in any act of rascality as Marks, and be able to escape, he could defy discovery as the fashionable and handsome man-about-town.

Hardly had Captain Firefly left his office when in came the old clerk to say that an old white-haired sailor wished to see him.

For some reason Marks never denied a sailor, and he said promptly:

"Show him in."

A moment after a man entered and sunk, as though weary, into a chair.

His form was bent, his clothing seedy, and his hair and beard were gray with seeming age.

"Well, old man, how can I serve you?" asked Marks, in his squeaky assumed voice.

"Do you know the pirate, Captain Carl?" asked the old man.

"I knew there was such a man, but he is dead."

"Do you mean it?" quickly asked the stranger.

"Yes."

"When did he die?"

"Oh, some time ago; but why do you come here to talk to me about that red-handed pirate?" impatiently said Marks.

"I come to tell you that he is not dead."

"Not dead? Captain Carl not dead!" cried Marks springing to his feet.

"Why you seem terribly excited about it; but it is the truth," and the old sailor wheeled quickly, left the room and disappeared before Marks could overtake him.

This visit left a very unpleasant feeling with Marks, and he appeared to be considerably worried as the days passed by.

But at last Captain Firefly told him he was going to be ready to sail soon, and he hooted at the idea that Carl the Corsair yet lived, while he said:

"Way I have talked to the men who were in

the fight of the schooners, and they tell me that Captain Carl was badly wounded, fell from the yard and struck the water with terrible force, disappearing at once beneath the sea."

"Why should that old rascal come and tell me such a story then?"

"That I do not know, but he has lied to you, Marks, for Captain Carl is dead, and more, should he turn up he will find me afloat, bearing his name, and I love it so dearly I intend to stick to it even if his ghost should appear to claim it."

So saying Captain Firefly departed, and soon after in came the clerk with the news that the old sailor who had called before wished to see Mr. Marks.

"Show him in, and do you be near to head him off, should I call on you to stop him," said Marks.

"Yes, sir," and in came the old sailor.

"Well, my man, you have come back with another story about Captain Carl the Corsair being alive, I suppose?" said Marks with a sneer.

"Yes, I come with the same story," was the reply.

"I do not believe you."

"What is the corsair to you?"

"Nothing."

"Why do you doubt me?"

"From the manner of Carl's death, I feel that he could not have survived."

"Stranger things happened."

"Yes; but what are you to Captain Carl?"

"Nothing."

"Why do you come to me about him?"

"I wish to talk business with you in his behalf."

"What business can I have with the pirate?"

"He sent me to you to say he was alive, and wished you to again send him to sea."

"Again?"

"That is the word he used, and he said he was ready to go at any time."

"Where is he?"

"That I will not tell."

"Who are you?"

"His friend."

"Then go to him and say I will do nothing for him."

"You better consider."

"I have nothing to consider."

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I am no fitter out of pirates, and care to have nothing to do with them."

"Captain Carl is an exception."

"I make no exceptions."

"He may force you to do so."

"Bah! no man can force me to do that which I care not to do, and I tell you now to begone, for I am tired of this."

"I prefer to remain."

"Then I'll have my office man throw you out," angrily said Marks, for he was growing uneasy in the presence of the man.

"You will do no such thing, Marks; but how fearfully obtuse you are, and how blind, for a man who wears disguises himself."

"Great God! you are Captain Carl!" and Marks was upon his feet in an instant, and strangely excited.

"Yes, I am Captain Carl, and as you see, I am not dead," was the cool reply, and the pirate chief drew nearer to Marks, and threw himself down into an easy-chair, while he seemed to really enjoy the situation.

CHAPTER X.

THE PIRATE'S STORY.

MARKS was a man not easily disturbed, but he certainly was in this case, when he beheld before him in the old sailor, none other than Captain Carl the Buccaneer.

"What! do you tell me the truth?" he fairly gasped.

"Oh, yes."

"You are Captain Carl?"

"I am."

"I can hardly believe it."

"It is true; I am the man you got out of gambling and other debts, by making me turn pirate."

"I did well by you."

"Oh, yes, you fitted out a vessel for me, and I hoisted the black flag, killed, robbed, and sent the booty to you, or your agents, and the result was that you grew rich."

"My crew got good pay, I made money, and all seemed to go well."

"But I lost my vessel, and had to hide like a cur to save my life."

"I got again afloat in my old vessel, and had barely begun work when I was again captured."

"You should not have gone into the Chesapeake."

"Pardon me. As captain of my vessel, I go where I please."

"And lost your vessel, and, as I believed until but now, your life, as you got hemmed in."

"I met one who will yet be heard of in the service, for he handles a vessel superbly."

"He is but a boy in years, but a man, and a thorough sailor."

"He has thwarted me in everything, and I owe to him the losing of my vessel each time."

"You may know that I hate him, Marks, and some day I will get my revenge; but let me tell you of my escape."

"Yes; I would be glad to know, for your fight was by day."

"It was; and when all was lost I sought to escape by the yard, which was on a level with the top of a cliff."

"I knew the waters there, so ran in alongside of the cliff, ran my port guns to starboard, and tried to beat the enemy off with my double battery."

"But this boy, Duncan Dare, ran his schooner alongside, and the men cried for quarter."

"I saw a way of escape, so went up the rigging like a cat, and was walking along on the yard to reach the cliff, when that same boy attacked me, for he had run up the port ratelines."

"I disarmed him, and would then have reached the cliff, but just then a girl faced me, pistol in hand—"

"Miss Kate Kenyon?"

"Yes, it was she."

"Ah!"

"I saw my danger, so leaped from the yard and into the sea, between the hull and the cliff."

"I swam a long way under water, and came up against the cliff some distance from the schooner's bows, and, as good luck would have it, just where a hollow had been washed by the waves in the cliff wall."

"Into this I went, and, with the spray dashing hard into it, lay hidden until nightfall, looking at the boats searching diligently for me."

"After nightfall I made my escape, and I did not wonder that all said I was dead, for I escaped only by the merest chance in the world, and here I am."

"I am glad to see you, Captain Carl, and I congratulate you upon your escape."

"Do you?"

"I think you should know that I do."

"I do not look upon you as my friend, Marks, except where it suits you to be."

"I am your friend, Captain Carl."

"And will prove it?"

"How can I?"

"I need money to get me another vessel, fit her out, engage a crew and get to sea."

"You will return to piracy, then?"

"What else can I do?"

"Nothing that I can see; but what terms do you offer?"

"I have nothing."

"And you expect me to advance all the money?"

"Certainly, for you made ten times as much as I need out of the booty I sent you."

"How much do you need?"

"Call it fifty thousand, though I will not need that sum."

"Money is scarce now, captain."

"Not with you."

"But I have a vessel now under way, and that will soon sail."

"Who commands her?"

"A friend of mine."

"Well, you will reap a double income then, when I am out at sea."

"I must have half the booty."

"Well, so be it."

"And you are to pay your crew and all other expenses out of the other half, keeping the balance for yourself."

"Yes, I will do so."

"Well, come here to-morrow, and you shall have my answer as to what I will do."

"I will be here without fail."

And, after a few words more of conversation, the pirate took his leave.

"Jenks!" called out Marks.

"Yes, sir!"

"Send at once for Captain Firefly, and tell him I must see him without fail."

And it was evident, from the cunning look upon the face of Marks, that he had plotted some scheme for mischief.

CHAPTER XI.

MARKS PLAYS A DEEP GAME.

In a couple of hours' time, Captain Firefly put in an appearance in the miser's office.

"You sent for me, Mr. Marks?"

"Yes, sir."

"Has aught gone wrong?"

"Well, yes, Captain Firefly."

"Captain Carl is my name now, sir," said Firefly, with a smile.

"Ah, yes! and it is to tell you that Captain Carl is not dead that I sent for you."

"Not dead?"

"No, sir; he escaped in a most miraculous way, and has not been gone from my office but a short while."

"This is strange; but I wonder if he would go as my first luff?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Captain Carl plays second to no man."

"Nor do I."

"You cannot make an arrangement then, for no vessel can sail under two masters."

"That is true."

"But Captain Carl has come to me to fit a vessel up for him."

"And your answer?"

"That I was fitting one out now."

"Well?"

"And that we must do."

"Do you refer to mine?"

"Certainly."

"Do you mean to say that I must give way to Carl?"

"Your name is now Captain Carl, as I understand it?"

"Yes."

"Well, there can be but one Captain Carl."

"So I say."

"Well, sir, I have only one piece of advice to give."

"I am ready to hear it, if I do not heed it."

"You will heed it."

"You speak with strange confidence, Marks."

"I know whereof I speak."

"You do not know me."

"I do not ask you to let him be captain."

"What then?"

"I can fit out but one vessel, and you have that in hand, but there can be but one Captain Carl."

"Yes."

"The real one is here, and you have his name."

"True."

"You have the money I gave you to fit out the vessel and equip it."

"And all is nearly ready."

"He is penniless and unable to do one thing unless I help him."

"Then he is by no means dangerous."

"He is, for I know the man, and he'll save his neck by betraying your intentions."

"Put what does he know?"

"Enough to hang you and your crew."

"This is bad."

"Still it can be gotten over."

"How?"

"By killing the real Carl."

"Ah! but he seemed to be a fine fellow when I met him, and as he is in hard luck he may be persuaded to go as first luff with me."

"He will not."

"How does he know what is being done by me?"

"I told him I had a vessel being gotten ready, and would not help him."

"Ah! and he threatens, if you do not?"

"Yes."

"I fear he must die then."

"Yes, it seems so, and if you take my way of getting rid of him, I'll give you a clean five thousand."

"And what way is that?"

"You are to meet him here; challenge him to fight you with cutlasses on your own deck, before your crew, and let the survivor take the craft as captain."

"I am no coward, Marks, but I do not care to do this."

"You fear that he will kill you?"

"Oh, no, for I have never met my equal with a blade; but I'd rather put a man on his track to knife him in the back."

"You must end it as I wish, for I am determined upon it."

"What motive have you for this?"

"To get rid of Captain Carl."

"Or myself?" sneered the pirate.

"No, for I like you, and I wish you to live, while I am anxious to see Carl dead, as he stands in my way."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, that is my motive."

"But why select me to do the work?"

"Because I know your skill as a swordsman, and I feel that you can kill him."

"Well, I shall do my best, for I am determined that he shall not betray me."

"So am I, so be here to-morrow afternoon."

"I will come, but mind you, I set sail to-morrow night, and the duel must be fought then, after we are well under way and you must be there."

"I will go and then I'll know whether Carl be dead or not, for he is like a cat in the way of lives it seems."

"To-morrow we meet here, in the morning, and then arrange for the night."

"Yes."

"You and Captain Carl can go up the river in a small boat and await my coming off Witches' Island, and I will take you on board and the duel can take place then, and may the best man triumph, for I am determined there shall be but one Captain Carl."

"You are right, sir; now I will not detain you longer," and Marks bowed the captain out, while he muttered, as he locked the door and then sought his secret rooms, as on a former occasion:

"Now, Carl Casandra, I remove you by the hand of Firefly out of my path, and then there will be no dread of you running off with Kate Kenyon, no barrier between us, so that she shall become my wife."

"As for Firefly, he will make more money for me than would Carl, for he is not so reckless, and will place all of his booty in my hands for sale, while I am sure that Casandra deceived me as to his captures and had an agent elsewhere."

"Now to get Captain Carl into the trap, by telling him to go with me in a boat where he can see a vessel I have selected for him; but Firefly will be the victor, I am sure."

"If not, I'll have Carl assassinated, for he must not live to thwart me in any game I wish to play."

CHAPTER XII.

FIREFLIES AT WORK.

WHEN Captain Firefly left the office of Marks, he wended his steps down toward the city, and stopped at a sailors' tavern, which stood not far from Fulton street, and fronting the East river.

He was met at the doorway by a young sailor, who appeared to be hardly more than a boy in years, and who was a handsome, dashing youth, with a frank face, full of earnestness, and whose manner was jaunty and winning.

"Well, Redfern, what news?" asked Captain Firefly.

"The plot is working, father, and all will go well, I hope, for to-morrow night," was the answer of the youth, who scarcely looked eighteen, and was dressed in a neat sailor-boy's suit.

"All must go well, Fern, for we must know no such word as fail."

"It will go all right, sir, for I am trusted by the officers, and they will go with me at the appointed time to make the seizure."

"I hate the risk you have to run, Fern, and wish that some of the men would have undertaken it."

"It is better that I should, for the gain is greater for you, than for any man, father, and I cannot be in more danger than one of the crew would have to face."

"I shall go on board the schooner to-morrow, and just after nightfall we will start on the expedition."

"But I don't like it, I confess, with you taking all the risk, for how can you escape, Fern?"

"I'll get off some way, sir, never fear, and you'll get the schooner."

"Well, I hope so, but upon you all depends, and it is a young head and shoulders to put such a weight upon."

"Both head and shoulders will bear the weight, father," replied the youth with a light laugh, and the two passed on into the tavern, and ascended to the floor above.

Entering a pleasant sleeping-room, with a smaller one adjoining, Captain Firefly drew aside a curtain, which concealed what appeared to be a window.

But, touching a spring, the window opened, and a large room appeared on the other side.

There were bunks along the walls, two long tables, running the length of the room, benches and a few chairs.

The room was occupied by fully half a hundred men, wild, reckless seamen, as their garb and appearance indicated.

The light and air in the room came from open skylights in the roof above, and that the place was a secret resort a look revealed.

There was a subdued air upon the men, and they one and all seemed to feel that they were to keep quiet in their retreat.

As the captain entered, accompanied by the boy, the crowd arose and saluted with the same air of respect that honest tars might have shown a naval officer upon the quarter-deck; but then Captain Firefly was a stickler for etiquette and discipline even among his outlaw crew.

"Lads, I have come to tell you that all goes well, and we start to-morrow night upon our expedition," and at the words of their commander a murmur of satisfaction went through the crowd.

"You are to leave here, half of you to-night, under my guidance, and I will quarter you at the old Haunted Tavern up the river, while the rest of you can depart by twos and threes during to-morrow and make your way thither quietly, so as not to attract attention."

"The boats are ready, or will be to-night, and to-morrow night my son here, and who is my lieutenant, will place the schooner in our power."

"If any of you wish to withdraw from the affair, say so now, for I wish no cowards, or men who intend to play me false."

"Such a man's life shall not be worth a shilling, I wish to say, for he shall be slain without mercy."

"If you prove all I hope of you, your share of the profits of our cruise shall be most liberal, and I will not ask you to do what I will not share in."

"The best two men I find among you, shall be my second and third officers, and the boatswain, and other officers I will appoint from among you, making my selection from those I deem the best calculated for the positions."

"You have behaved well in your close quarters here, and I believe you will be all I could expect."

"Now be ready to move to-night," and with a wave of the hand Captain Firefly turned and departed, accompanied by Redfern the youth, while a murmur of applause followed them.

Late that night a band of men left the tavern, and, going toward the river in straggling parties, entered boats that were there awaiting them.

Captain Firefly was in their midst, as was also the youth Redfern, and they proceeded up the river, one boat at a time, so as not to attract attention.

Just this side of Hell Gate, on the Long Island shore, they came to an old tumble-down mansion, large, high and rambling in structure.

It was what is known as a shingle house, its sides as well as roof being covered with shingles, and to-day even it is a fashionable style of structure on Long Island, while there are houses so built standing there now that are two hundred years old, and good for another century.

The place had once been a tavern, at a ferry that there crossed the river; but one night a pirate vessel had landed its crew and the occupants had all been slain, while a large hole in the hearth of the landlord's sleeping-room showed that a treasure had been taken from there by the murderous marauders.

Others had sought to keep the old tavern, but all had failed, for it was said the place was haunted by the ghosts of the slain, and it had been deserted and gradually went to ruin.

The crew of Captain Firefly knew of the place, and rather disliked the idea of being quartered there; but their numbers gave them courage, and they followed their leader into the deserted structure, their entrance disturbing bats, owls and some wild animal that fled with a yelp.

As though acquainted with the surroundings, Captain Firefly led the way into the long hall, and then, opening the shade of his lantern, he passed into what had once been the tap-room, and then into the dining-room.

"Lads, this is in the rear of the house, and lights here are not apt to be seen, so remain here and make yourselves as comfortable as possible on the chairs and tables; but first put blankets up over the windows," said Captain Firefly.

The men all had bundles with them, and some carried baskets of provisions, so that it was not long before they did make themselves as comfortable as the surroundings permitted, and Captain Firefly, telling them that the remainder of the crew would follow in small bands, took his departure, followed by Redfern.

The captain carried his dark-lantern, with the slide open, and ascended the stairs with the air of one who knew where he was going.

In the second story was a hall, which penetrated one of the wings, and down this he went, his son close at his heels, until he came to the end, as it appeared.

But leaning against the oaken panel, on each side of the window, it turned under his weight, and a narrow aperture was revealed, into which the two stepped.

There a pair of stairs hardly eighteen inches wide, were visible, and ascending them, they entered, through a trap in the floor, a room some fifteen feet square.

"This is in the roof, Fern, and so arranged that no one would suspect a room being here; see, we get our light and air by skylights, but no one on the main roof of the house could see this place," and Firefly seemed to enjoy the surprise of the boy, who saw that the room was furnished comfortably, that cooking utensils were upon the small hearth, and that bales and boxes, seemingly of precious goods, were piled in one corner.

"Father, some one lives here," said Fern.

"Yes, it has been my quarters for years, when I happened to be in hiding on my visits to the city."

"But the ghosts?"

"They never trouble me, Fern, for I knew them well in life," sadly said the pirate.

"You knew them, father?"

"Ah, yes."

"And you know this place well?"

"Put your traps down here, for you will stay here until you go on board the schooner to-morrow, and I will show you how well I know it," and lighting a lamp that stood in the room, Firefly picked up his lantern and bade the youth follow him from the room.

In surprise, and somewhat awed by his surroundings, Redfern obeyed, and the two descended the narrow stairs, leaving the trap hid in the floor open behind them.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HAUNTED INN.

"THIS is the way you open and close this panel," said Firefly, addressing his son, as they reached the little space on one side of the hall window, and he showed Redfern the secret entrance.

It certainly did not look like a secret panel, for its counterpart in appearance was on the other side of the window, which looked out from the end of the hall upon a weed-grown garden.

"The walls were built purposely thick here, for the stairway, Fern, and the secret chamber has been the hiding-place of many a poor wretch."

"Nor is this the only secret room in the mansion, as you shall some time know."

"Here, come into this room with me."

"See, it is furnished as it was years ago, for nothing here has been disturbed."

"It is a pleasant chamber, and those windows command a fine view of the river and country about."

"It seems to impress me, father, in some strange way, and I must have fresh air," said the youth.

"Throw open that window; there! now you will feel better; but I do not wonder that you feel strange in this room, for it was where you were born, Fern."

The youth uttered a cry of surprise and glanced about him with an awed look.

"I was born in this room, father?"

"Yes, my son, just eighteen years ago."

"And my mother?"

"Is buried out yonder in the woodland, along with her parents, and the two faithful servants who were murdered with her, seventeen years ago."

"My God! father, what does this mean?" gasped the youth.

"It means, Fern, that here lived your grandparents, and their daughter, your mother, for the property was theirs."

"I was then a young sailor, mate on a coaster of which I was part owner."

"We were sailing through Hell Gate one day when a squall struck us and I was knocked overboard, and the schooner dashed on, leaving me to my fate, for no rescue could be attempted by her crew in those wild waters."

"Suddenly, out from a rocky cove where she had been fishing, dashed a young girl in a light skiff, and she saved me from death, for my arm had been hurt by the boom striking me as it jibed."

"That girl was your mother, and I loved her at first sight."

"She was very beautiful, and so very kind and brave, and her parents gave me a warm welcome, and made me their guest the two weeks I spent at the inn."

"The result was that I loved your mother with all my heart, and in return won her promise to become my wife."

"She had had many suitors, one a cousin who was well to do and a shipping clerk in the

city; but she did not love him, as it was said he led a fast life and was squandering his inheritance.

"One night we were married, and a gay party were at the inn."

"In the midst of a dance with your mother a bullet came through the window and sunk into my shoulder."

"We searched for the assassin, and yet he was nowhere to be found."

"The wound was not serious however, and soon after I continued my cruise."

"A year after I bought a trim brig and sailed for the West Indies, and being most successful I remained away for many months."

"When I returned, it was to find that your mother, her old parents and two servants had all been murdered, and the place robbed of considerable treasure; it was the work of pirates, it was said, though I had my suspicion that your mother's cousin had done the deed, for he had been forced to fly from the city months before on account of his debts."

"What was his name?"

"You will find it cut into a tree, with your mother's, years ago."

"The tree stands on the hill above the little burying-ground where all were placed after the murder."

"I came back to find all dead that I had loved, my child, and yet, strange to say, one who was in this room remained."

"That one was you."

"Father!"

"You lay in your cradle—there it is, in the very corner where it stood that fatal night, and you were not seen by the murderers."

"The next day you had been found, crying from hunger, and your mother dead upon the floor."

"I greeted you, on my return with joy untold, and, when I visited your mother's grave, I saw growing there a species of fern, only it had turned red under the touch of the frost."

"From that circumstance I gave you your name of Fern, and, upon your coming into my band, rechristened you as Redfern, my son."

"I was broken-hearted at the death of your mother, became idle, went to the bad as it were, and one night I killed a man in self-defense; but it was sworn that I murdered him, for he had friends and I was almost a vagabond, and I was sentenced to die on the gallows."

"But one night I was rescued by a band of pirates, who had landed and attacked the jail, to free some of their own men, and I went with them."

"I was not bad at heart, so soon left the vessel, and I became a smuggler, as that paid well, and I did not look upon it as such a great crime to keep the Government from getting a few dollars in duty."

"I changed my life of dissipation too, placed you in a family where you would be happy, and receive an education, and then I began my career of smuggling, soon rising to the leadership of the band."

"From various causes you suspected me, dogged my steps, discovered my occupation, and forced me to consent to let you join me."

"I wished to get you away from such a life, father."

"True, and instead you have become a member of the band."

"I would not leave you, father."

"And I would have given up all, as I promised you, Fern, had I not met with my last ill-fortune on Sandy Hook; but I cannot give up now until I have enough for us to live on, and the cruise I now make will give me that."

"It will be blood-money, father."

"All money has been, in some way, put to evil purposes, so what I get will be no worse, my son; but you have my pledge to give up out-lawry as soon as I complete this cruise we start on."

"I am glad to hear you say this, father, for I have had hope all along that you would yet change your life, and that is why I have shared your fortunes the year past; but how deeply I am impressed with this room, and I feel that your promise, made here, will not be broken."

"But you must be off on your return to the city, as there is much for you to do, and I will remain here to-night, in this room, and to-morrow afternoon, late, I will go on board the schooner."

"Yes, it is time I should be returning, but I hate to leave you here alone."

"If I get lonesome I will go down where the men are," was the reply, and a moment after Captain Firefly departed, leaving the youth standing by the open window, gazing out upon the starlit waters of the river, while thick and

fast upon him crowded memories of the past, recalled by his being there in the room where he was born, and where his mother had been cruelly murdered.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TELL-TALE DAGGER.

For a long time did Redfern stand at the window, buried in sad meditations.

Then, with a sigh, he closed the shutters and turned to have a better look at the room.

It appeared to have been left just as it was on the fatal night of the murder, even to the bed-clothing, which lay in disorder.

In fact the room had been closed at once, and no one had cared to even go there again, while Firefly, into whose hands the property had fallen, had locked up the family rooms, in which the crimes had been committed, and rented the inn to a landlord who had the pluck to reopen it.

But he had soon failed for want of patrons, and thus the old place had been left desolate, and went to decay, avoided by all, and standing half a mile from other habitations, no one cared to go near it in its solitude.

As he turned the bull's-eye light around, to get a better look, Redfern's eyes fell upon a glittering object lying under the bed and far back against the wall.

Quickly he walked there, and stooping, picked it up.

It was a small dagger, with jeweled hilt, and the blade was stained with rust.

Upon the hilt were two initials in small diamonds.

"Great God! this is the very weapon that killed my poor mother, for I feel that it is, and it may lead to the discovery of her murderer."

"I will keep it," and he again glanced about the room.

In an old desk he found some papers, and these he took, and then went back to the secret chamber in the roof.

As he did so he heard a voice.

It startled him, for certainly it was a human voice.

For a long time he listened, but the sound was not repeated, and he said:

"It was some of the men looking around outside."

Then he lay down upon the cot in the room, and leaving the lamp burning went to sleep.

But he awoke with a start, for again he heard that voice.

Still as death he waited, but the sound came not again to his ears, and once more he slept.

When he awoke the sun was up, and he arose and descended to the dining-hall where the men were.

They saluted him politely and said they had all been quiet, and had heard no suspicious sounds during the night.

After breakfasting with the men, Redfern walked out into the grounds.

They were desolate and overgrown with weeds, while the fences were rotting away.

A weed-filled roadway led back up the hill into the forest, and following this he soon came to a little inclosure in which were five graves, over one of which was a marble slab, the others being marked by simple stones.

A stone wall about the graves, and the one with the marble slab seemed to have been kept free from weeds and underbrush.

Leaping over the wall the youth halted by the well-kept grave, for something told him it was beneath that marble his mother's ashes rested.

Aloud he read the inscription:

"SACRED TO THE MEMORY

of

HELEN TRUAX,

A WIFE AND A MOTHER.

Cruelly Slain in Hell Gate Tavern, August 15th, 17—,
by Pirate Marauders.

*May her ashes rest in peace.
May her joy above be complete.*

"Such was my mother's name—Helen Truax—and my father's is Tracey Truax, though he never claims it now."

"Now to see the name cut into the tree," said Redfern, and he again leaped the wall and ascending the hill, halted by a clump of trees, which had evidently at one time been a shady retreat for those living at the inn.

Upon the smooth bark of one of the trees was cut, with a knife, as follows:

"HELEN MERTON

AND

MERTON REGNIER.

October 15th, 17—.

This day shall never be forgotten."

"And why was this day to be remembered muttered the youth."

"Did my mother accept his love then, or refuse it?"

"Ha! the name on the tree, the initials on the dagger!"

"M. R. is on the dagger, and Merton Regnier is on the tree."

"Great God! this is proof to me that my mother was murdered by her discarded cousin."

"But where is he now?"

"Heaven only knows; but if alive, some day we may meet, and then she who lies in yonder grave shall be avenged!"

And the white face and set lips of the youth showed that he meant what he threatened.

For some time he remained by the tree, and then went back to the grave of his mother.

After a long time he turned his steps slowly toward the inn, and after a short talk with the men, went down to the shore, sprung into a light skiff, hoisted the little leg-of-mutton sail, and started upon his way back to the city.

On the run he passed a couple of fishing-boats, with half a dozen men in each, but he knew that they were others of his band.

Nearing the city he ran toward a small schooner that was anchored close in-shore, and was promptly hailed from her decks.

"I would see Captain Beverly," he answered.

"Ay, ay, come alongside," was the answer.

In a moment more he had boarded the vessel and was in the cabin talking earnestly with the handsome young officer who commanded the pretty schooner-of-war Vidette.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RIVAL ROVERS.

TRUE to his promise the next day, made to Marks the miser merchant, Captain Firefly went to his office and there found that mysterious individual awaiting him.

"Has Captain Carl put in an appearance yet?" he asked.

"No, but you are prompt."

"I always am."

"He will be here soon."

"I hope so, for there is much to do."

"You have fully determined to carry out my ideas?"

"Yes."

"Where is the schooner?"

"She will be at the rendezvous to-night on time."

"How much did she cost you?"

"When you see her you will know, and can then say if I paid too much."

"I hope you have a good armament."

"I have."

"And your crew?"

"Are all good men."

"How many?"

"Sixty."

"Hardly enough."

"I can increase them as I need them."

"Where will you cruise?"

"Southward."

"Among the Indies is the richest picking."

"Yes."

"You see I take it for granted you will be successful in your meeting with Captain Carl."

"I intend to be, for I have no fear of any man's blade."

"You are certainly an expert; but here comes Carl."

As Marks spoke Captain Carl entered the inner office, ushered in by the clerk Jenks.

He still wore the disguise of an aged man, and nodded to the merchant as he entered, and then offered his hand to the smuggler, while he said:

"Well, Captain Firefly, we meet again, and both of us are in ill-fortune, it seems."

"No, for I have a vessel ready for sea to-night, and I wish to offer you a berth in her."

"As captain?"

"Oh, no, as first luff."

"I play second to no man, Captain Firefly," was the stern response.

"As you please, sir."

"I will take command if you wish."

"No, I am to be commander; but there is a chance for you, too."

"Not in an inferior position."

"Perhaps in a leadership."

"Ah! in what way, pray?"

"Well, if you cannot arrange with our friend Marks, we will talk over a plan."

"And what can you do for me, Marks?"

"Nothing, Captain Carl."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do."

"After all that I have done to enrich you?"

"You have had your share, sir; but I am at

present cramped for funds, and my advice to you is to take Captain Firefly at his offer."

"Of first luff?"

"No; of a chance for the captaincy."

"How do you mean it can be done?"

"Go with us to-night to the captain's vessel, and we will show you."

"I'll go."

"One moment, Mr. Marks. I go alone, but you and Captain Carl can come in a whale-boat I'll have ready for you, and board me at a point on the river above Hell Gate."

"That will be as well," said Marks.

"It suits me," returned Captain Carl, and he added:

"Only I would like to know more about this affair."

"All in good time, Captain Carl; but take my word for it, there is a fine schooner, fully armed, equipped, manned and stored, that you have an opportunity to command on certain conditions, which will be explained to you upon reaching the vessel."

"Well, I'll go; but I don't like this mystery, and if it was shown by other than you and Marks, I would be suspicious of foul play."

"I assure you, Captain Carl, that no foul play is intended, and, as fellow-outlaws, I deem it that you can trust me," remarked Captain Firefly.

"And I do; but Marks, now is it true you cannot raise me some money?"

"I told you I was cramped."

"I do not believe it."

"Still it is true."

"Firefly has lost his den, his booty, and his vessels, and yet he is enabled to buy a schooner and get to sea in her."

"Very true."

"You advanced him the money, doubtless?"

"I did."

"And will not do as much for me?"

"You may find to-night that I have done the same for you that I have for him."

"Indeed! how is this?"

"Wait and see," was the cool response.

"Well, I trust you, Marks, and, in fact, can do nothing else; but I have found it best to put confidence in no man."

"Not even yourself, Captain Carl, for you have been your own enemy all your life; but you must trust me in this work, for you cannot do otherwise, and I repeat to you, there is a chance that it may end in your commanding a fine vessel."

"When?"

"To-night."

"Good! I am at your service."

"When do we start?"

"This afternoon at four, I will have a boat, with a good seaman in it, at the Rocky Point above here, and he will take you to the cove, where I will join you to-night."

"If I do not meet you, it will be because I am dead, and in that case Mr. Marks will know just what to do."

"But, if the schooner does not get there, Mr. Marks and you, Captain Carl, will soon know the reason of her not coming."

"Until to-night, I will say farewell," and Captain Firefly left the miser's office.

After his departure Captain Carl upbraided Marks for showing more friendship for the smuggler captain than he did for him, and Marks answered:

"When Captain Firefly came to me he was in bad luck, and I helped him upon terms very favorable to myself."

"I did not know that you were alive, Captain Carl, and had I known it, still I would have felt afraid of you, for you would this night gamble away any sum I gave you, and if I placed you in command of a vessel, she should be fitted out for you, so that you should not touch a dollar."

"Do that then, for all I want is a vessel."

"Then wait and see what to-night will bring for you."

"Well, I can only wait."

"Come here in time to start with me to the waiting boat; but now you must go, for I have more important work on hand," and thus dismissed Captain Carl took his leave, but returned in time to keep his engagement, and found Marks awaiting him.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT EXPEDITION.

THE schooner-of-war which Redfern had boarded, was the American vessel Vidette, and she was certainly a very trim-looking and able piece of naval architecture.

Her captain received the youth well, and said:

"Well, my lad, tell me first what your plans are for to-night?"

"Well, sir, you remember that I told you that Firefly the smuggler had another retreat?"

"Yes."

"And that he has there several little sloops, some thirty men, and considerable booty."

"So you said."

"Now, it is my desire to lead you to the secret retreat of the smugglers."

"I know, my lad, and you have said that you have a motive which you cannot divulge."

"I have, sir."

"And you will not tell it me?"

"No, sir, I cannot."

"Yet you ask me to trust you?"

"In what could I deceive you, sir?"

"Well, my lad, I will trust you, and I will go in the captured pirate schooner Spitfire."

"That was Captain Carl's craft, sir?"

"Yes, and she is in good trim, but has few men on board, while I have the pirate prisoners here with me, in the Vidette's hold, and I do not care to remove them."

"I will have a strong guard on board my schooner, and go with forty men on the Spitfire, running up to the river in her; but how near to the smugglers' nest can she go?"

"What does she draw, sir?"

"Ten and a half feet."

"She cannot go nearer than two miles, sir, for their retreat is up in the hills toward Spuyten Duyvil Creek, and your boats must go by way of the Harlem river, and with muffled oars, while the schooner anchors in the river to await your return."

"Very well, we will accomplish our work well, under your guidance, and you shall be well paid for the services you render."

"As I told you, sir, when I first came to see you about making the attack on the smugglers, I would take no gold."

"But you will change your mind?"

"No, sir."

"If I urge it?"

"I will refuse, sir, for I am not doing what I offer for gold."

"Very well, I suppose I'll have to look out to get for you a middy's berth, for you would not refuse that, I am sure?"

"I would, sir."

"Why I have a young officer with me, hardly older than you are, who has greatly distinguished himself, and risen from a farmer lad to the command of a little coast cruiser, now being fitted out for him, and within a year's time."

"That is Duncan Dare, sir?"

"Yes; do you know him?"

"No, sir; but I have often heard of him, and his gallant deeds."

"And do not care to emulate him?"

"No, sir, I have no ambition of that kind."

"You are a strange boy."

"Yes, sir," was the affirmative response of Redfern, who seemed to feel that he was indeed a strange youth.

As night came on the crew of the schooner were astir, and soon after two boat-loads of men put off from her side.

A pull of a quarter of a mile, and they came alongside of a schooner equally as beautiful and trim.

It was the corsair craft Spitfire.

On board of her was a guard of a dozen seamen, under command of a midshipman, and these, with the men from the Vidette made over two-score brave tars for the night expedition.

"I am sorry that Duncan Dare is not here to go on the expedition with us," said Captain Beverly, addressing the midshipman in charge.

"So am I, sir, for he is a great help in a fight," was the answer.

The vessel was soon ready to start, the anchors were up and the sails were set, so that she glided swiftly out into the river.

A skillful pilot was at the helm, and she passed on up the East river, leaving the lighted city astern of her, ran the gantlet of the lower end of the rough waters of Hell Gate, and headed up toward what is now known as the Harlem river.

Lights from a farm-house or two were all that could be seen along the dark shores then, where now a grand city lies, and it was a dismal anchorage where the schooner at last came to a halt, close in under the shadow of overhanging trees that fringed the bank.

A single anchor was dropped, the sails were left set, for the wind was light, and the two boats were lowered.

"You had better take all the men you can, sir, for as I told you, there are thirty odd smugglers in the retreat."

"Yes, and we may need them, while the

schooner will certainly be safe here in this out-of-the-way place," remarked Captain Burton Beverly, and he gave orders to an under officer and six men only to remain on board.

"Keep your eyes and ears open, my man, for there is no telling what may happen," said the young commander, and he gave orders for the boats to push off.

Redfern sat in the bow of the leading boat, the one in which was was Burton Beverly, and the boy acted as pilot up the stream.

With muffled oars the boats went swiftly along, one in the wake of the other, and in half an hour the order came from the boy:

"Port your helm, sir, and head for yonder dark point."

"Is there good water there?" came back the whispered query.

"Yes, sir, and a good landing."

On the boats went, then some changed toward the wooded point, and in a little while they were in almost impenetrable darkness as they glided into the deep shadows of the overhanging trees.

Suddenly a crash of fire-arms fell upon their ears, coming from far down the river, and the shouts of men and other shots followed.

"Hark!"

The order came from the lips of Burton Beverly, and, as he uttered the word, there was a splash in the water ahead and Redfern disappeared from sight beneath the waters.

"The boy has fallen overboard, sir!" cried a seaman.

"No, sir, he jumped!" called out another.

"By heavens, he is a traitor, and has led us into a trap."

"Hark! there is fighting down the river, and it is on board the schooner."

"This was a scheme to get possession of her."

"Back water, lads! Now give way, and pull, you hearties! Pull until you break your backs!" shouted Burton Beverly, and the boats fairly leaped through the water as they rushed down the river on the return to the schooner.

The firing and cries of the combatants had lasted but a minute and then all was still once more.

But the silence was foreboding, and as the boats reached the spot where the schooner had been kept at anchor, Burton Beverly said through his shut teeth:

"It is as I dreaded! The Spitfire has been again captured, and I half believe after all that Captain Carl, the Corsair, is not dead."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CAPTURE.

It was just dark when Captain Firefly arrived at the old Haunted Inn, accompanied by several of his men.

They went up to the house, joined their comrades, all of whom had now arrived, and had a hearty supper, after which they looked to their weapons and departed upon their trip to the rendezvous.

There were four boat-loads of them in all.

They were whale-boats, with small sails, and at the tiller of each was a pilot who knew the river well.

Straight over the dark waters they went, and headed into Harlem river, running in under the shadows of the further shore.

Here the trees overhung the waters, and under these the boats disappeared.

A man in each boat then seized the branches, and held them stationary, as soon as they were turned around, with their bows pointing outward.

The boats had taken up position some fifty feet apart, the oars were muffled and rested in the rowlocks, ready to "give way" at the order, and thus they waited, like tigers in ambush, awaiting their prey.

"Sail ho!" said a voice forward, and a schooner came in sight.

"It is the schooner-of-war, and Redfern is at her helm," said Captain Firefly gayly.

Into the river the schooner sailed, and running up within a cable's length of the ambushed boats dropped anchor.

The pirates watched the boats row away, and then remained in dead silence, awaiting the order of their commander.

Out of sight went the schooner's boats and Captain Firefly, who had been watching the schooner most attentively said: "That craft is Captain Carl's Spitfire, and not the Vidette, as I supposed."

Something has caused Captain Beverly to send her instead of his own vessel.

"Well, she's a splendid craft, and just as fleet, and I am content; but it will make Carl wild with rage."

So long did Captain Firefly wait, after the departure of the boats, that the crew grew most impatient, yet did not show it openly.

Captain Firefly knew that to attack too soon, before he had given his son a chance to land and make his escape, might prove the boy's death.

So he waited until he felt that he dared not longer delay.

"Ready all!"

The men started, and the oarsmen braced themselves for a pull.

"Give way!"

The oars fell in the water as one, and the boat shot out from under the trees.

It was a starlight night, and as the boat was seen by the other three, they too left their hiding-places.

So quietly did the four boats move through the waters that no one heard their approach upon the schooner.

But suddenly the officer in charge beheld a dark object moving out upon the waters.

Then the other boats caught his eye, and loudly he shouted the alarm.

The few men on board seized their weapons and fired upon the boats, but the position of the schooner just then prevented their using the heavy guns.

In another moment the boats were upon the schooner, one at the bow, another at the stern, a third at the starboard side, the fourth rowing around to port, and the vessel was in the clutches of the pirates, some of her defenders dying before their assailants as they boarded, several springing overboard, and those who remained being tossed into a boat alongside and set adrift.

"Up with the mud-hook, lads!"

"That's the way! Now she moves!"

"Trim in those sails, and let her feel the breeze."

"Now we are off, and we have won," and the pirate captain walked to the side of the helmsman.

"Head for the spot where we are to meet the other boat, helmsman," he ordered, and in a short while the schooner ran close in along the East river shore, and, shortening sail, came to an anchor.

At the same time, a hail came from off-shore:

"Schooner ahoy!"

"Ahoy!"

"What schooner is that?"

"Who is it that asks?"

"Firefly!" was the response.

"Ay, ay! come on board," called out Captain Firefly, and a boat soon after appeared, bearing three occupants.

"Captain Carl, I am glad to see you; and you also, Mr. Marks."

"You see that I have been successful, gentlemen."

"Yes, but this is my schooner, sir!" cried Captain Carl, sternly.

"I am well aware of that fact, sir."

"What does it mean, then?"

"It means that I expected to cut out the Vidette, schooner-of-war, Captain Carl, but for some reason this vessel was brought instead of the other."

"And she is mine, sir," angrily cried the pirate captain.

"Softly, Captain Carl, softly, for it remains to be seen if it is your vessel or not."

"But, Firefly, you say you cut the schooner out?" asked Marks.

"Yes, Mr. Marks, I plotted, and captured her."

"Then you did not buy her?"

"Why should I, when I got her without?"

"Nor purchase arms and equipments for her?"

"No, sir, she had all on board that I needed."

"Then she cost you no money?"

"Only a little ready cash for my men, and some little blood-letting, Mr. Marks."

"Then, sir, you will return to me the money I gave you?"

"By no means, Mr. Marks, for if I preferred to get a vessel by strategy, rather than by purchase, you see it makes no difference to you."

"It does, sir, and I shall demand my money."

"To demand and to get, sir, are two different things."

"But I shall—"

"Nay, my dear Mr. Marks, both you and Captain Carl seem inclined to be angry to-night, and there is no reason for it, I assure you."

"Your money, Mr. Marks, I invested in a way that will do one whom I care for more than life some good, and I chose to get this vessel without

buying her, so it is just the same as though she had cost the gold you advanced."

"As to you, Captain Carl, this vessel was no longer your craft after she was captured from you, and I have her now under my command, with a fine crew and all ready for a cruise."

"But you shall not keep her," fairly shouted Captain Carl.

"That remains to be seen, sir, for, as I told you to-day, you might get command of a vessel to-night, and, as I am ready to fill my part of the game, I will ask Mr. Marks to explain to you the exact situation."

Marks was a man to take matters quietly, when they could not be helped, and seeing that Captain Firefly had obtained a schooner without paying for it, he put the money he had given him to the credit of the vessel, just as though she had been paid for.

So he laughed lightly, and said:

"Well, Firefly, you are a cunning fox, and no mistake; but as you have the schooner it is all right, and I will explain to Captain Carl your plan."

"I surely shall be most delighted to hear it," said Captain Carl, impatiently.

"You see, Carl, when it was believed that you were dead, and that you therefore would have no further use of your name, Captain Firefly here determined to add honor to you, even in your grave, by raising the black flag as Captain Carl, the Ocean Firefly."

"A bold game this against me!" hissed the pirate.

"Oh, not at all, for you see Firefly had met with ill-luck as a smuggler, and determined to turn pirate, which pays better, as you know, Carl."

"So he came to me for gold, and I advanced him a large sum with which to buy a schooner, arm, equip and man her."

"He did all but buy her, as you see; but he has her, so let that drop."

"He asked you to be his first lieutenant, and you declined."

"Certainly I did."

"As you refused that, and as he had decided to take your name to give him prestige upon the sea, there was but one thing for him to do."

"And what was that?" asked Captain Carl in the same hateful manner he had before spoken.

"Of course there could not be two Captain Carls, and this gentleman here most generously offered to give you a chance to retain your name, so has made a proposition that depends upon you to accept or refuse."

"And what is the proposition, Marks?"

"That you fight him, here on this quarter-deck, with cutlasses, or short swords, as you may desire."

"By Heaven! I'll do it, if the survivor takes the craft."

"That is the situation, sir, and if you kill Firefly you are captain; but if he kills you, then he becomes Captain Carl, the Ocean Firefly."

"Now what do you say, my dear captain?"

"I accept the terms, sir," was the stern rejoinder of Captain Carl, and a light of triumph flashed in his dark eyes, while a defiant smile arose to his lips.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DUEL OF THE CAPTAINS.

GRIM and silent Captain Firefly stood waiting for the preliminaries to be arranged, for his sword combat with his rival.

He now recalled that he had forgotten to tell Redfern about his proposed meeting with Captain Carl; but he had invested his money for the youth, and this the boy knew about, and where to get it if he needed it.

He had arranged to meet the boy, after he should escape from the schooner's crew up the Harlem river, at a point on the north shore of the Sound, Redfern intending to make his way there and to remain until the schooner called for him.

But at heart Captain Firefly meant to deceive the boy, for he did not wish to have him on the vessel with him, and so determined to land near and send a fisherman to him with a letter, bidding him return to the city and lead a different life.

Now he thought of his boy, and, though he did not dread his encounter with Captain Carl, knowing his own skill as a swordsman, he yet thought it best to write the youth.

"Marks, if I write a letter to my son, will you see that it is delivered to him?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You will find him at a tavern on the Sound shore, not far from New Haven, and I rely upon you to see that he receives it."

"He shall get it, I pledge you," Marks replied. Entering the cabin Captain Firefly hastily wrote as follows:

"ON BOARD SCHOONER SPITFIRE,
LONG ISLAND SOUND,
Wednesday night."

"MY DEAR FERN:—

"This letter is to be given you by Mr. Marks, whose address in the city you know."

"I did not tell you yesterday that I intended to risk the command of the vessel by a mortal combat with Captain Carl the Corsair; but such is my intention, and within a few minutes it will be settled one way or the other."

"If I am successful, and I feel that I will be, for you know my skill with swords, I will cruise the seas under the name of Captain Carl; the Ocean Firefly, and, as soon as I have completed this voyage, as I pledged you I would, I will return to pass my days with you, and no longer as an outlaw."

"If Captain Carl kills me, then he will be the pirate chief and take the schooner and all."

"Should I fall, you know where to get the money I left you, and I feel that you will use it for your support, and live honorably through life."

"Go to Lockwood & Lockwood, attorneys, No. 7 Wall street, and tell them who you are, and give them proofs, and you will inherit the Haunted Inn, your grandparents' old home, and its many acres, and before you are old it will make you very rich, for the city is growing rapidly, and all land near will be valuable."

"You did nobly in getting the schooner for me, and I hope made your escape without accident."

"If I live, I will see you some time before very long, and shall be heartily glad to have finished my lawless life; but I wish to get back for the lads with me the losses they met when under my command, and also lay up a golden nest egg for ourselves in days to come."

"Heaven bless you, Fern, and protect you, is the wish of

Your father,

"TRACEY TRUAX."

This letter Captain Firefly sealed, and going on deck gave it to Marks, who put it carefully away in his pocket.

Then he said quietly: "I am ready, Captain Carl."

"I have been for some time, sir."

"Well, sir, you will have to wait no longer."

"Do you select cutlasses or swords?"

"I have selected swords, sir."

"Either will suit me," and turning to one of his officers Captain Firefly bade him muster the crew aft to witness the combat.

The men came quickly aft, and Captain Firefly said:

"Lads, as you see, I am to face this gentleman in deadly combat, and the one who triumphs is to be captain of this vessel."

"If I fall, you need feel no anxiety as to sailing under this gentleman, for he is one of whom you have all heard, being none other than Captain Carl the Corsair."

A murmur of surprise ran around among the men, and Captain Carl at once threw off the disguise that he wore, with an outer coat, revealing himself in uniform.

"Now, lads, you will soon know who is to be your captain."

Then he turned toward Captain Carl and said: "I am ready, sir."

Instantly Captain Carl raised his sword and the two men advanced toward each other.

Marks stood to port, coolly watching the combat, and the schooner's officers to starboard, while the crew, stretched across the deck in a solid mass looked on with deepest interest.

The swords came together with a loud ring, and the sparks flew right and left, while instantly the combat became hot and savage.

In an instant it was revealed to Captain Firefly, that, skillful swordsman that he was, he had met his equal, if not his master for once, and he became more cautious in his attack.

Recognizing this, Captain Carl acted at once on the offensive, and pressed his adversary with both skill and fury.

Captain Firefly was forced to give way before the onslaught, and stopped only when he felt his back was against the bulwarks; but the knowledge that he had met his master seemed to render him less skillful, and before long his sword-point was struck down, and Captain Carl thrust his blade forward and threw his whole weight upon it.

Into the body of the smuggler it drove, and stuck into the bulwark behind him, thus pinioning him there.

A groan of anguish and the head of Captain Firefly drooped upon his heart, his hands dropped limp to his sides, and he was dead.

"Captain Carl, you have killed him!" said Marks.

"I expected to," was the cool reply.

"And you are captain now of this vessel."

"Yes, Marks, and I have a mind to issue my first order to have you hanged; but you will be

useful to me, so I spare you; but beware how you act against my interests in future, for I am powerful once more now, and can reach you."

"I have been your friend, Captain Carl, and expect to be."

"Bah! The friendship of a snake! But where do you wish to land?"

"Over on the other shore, near a tavern I will tell you how to reach."

"Very well," and turning to the crew Captain Carl said:

"Lads, there lies your former captain, and by his terms with me, I am chief now."

"If you know aught of me, you know that I pay my men generously, and in return expect perfect obedience, the discipline of a vessel of war, and a courage to follow my lead without question."

"Now to your posts and get the anchor up, and sail on the schooner, for we must not delay here, as those boats are well on their way back to the Vidette, and she is a craft to fear, as well I know."

The men sprung nimbly to their posts, and five minutes after, the schooner was flying over the waters, her desperate commander again upon her deck, and a determination in his heart to make his name a terror along the coast from Maine to the Carolinas, for he said:

"I will be Captain Carl, the Ocean Firefly, now, and woe be unto my foes, and first of all that boy, Duncan Dare."

As the schooner left her anchorage and began to fade in the gloom, out from the shadows of the shore came a small sail-boat containing but one person, and at a swift pace she headed down toward New York City.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CHASE AND CAPTURE.

THE little sail-boat, as I have said, contained but a single occupant, and this one held the tiller with the skill of one who knew how to get his boat's full speed out of the wind then blowing.

The craft was a long, narrow fishing-boat, deep in the water, carried a large sail and stood up well under it.

It was half decked over, so that there was a small cabin aft, while the combing was high, so that she could not be deluged by a boarding wave.

She cut along at a lively pace, carrying full sail, and held down to her work well.

Hardly had she gotten clear of the little cove, where the schooner had run in and anchored, when the quick eye of the one at the tiller detected a dark object off on the waters.

"It is a boat, and without sail."

"Ah! he turns and runs, so that looks suspicious and I will overhaul him," and the sail was trimmed close, the helm put well down, and away sped the sail-boat in chase of the other.

"By Jupiter! how that fellow rows!"

"He fairly spins over the waters, and it will be no easy matter to overhaul him," said the one in pursuit.

But the sail-boat gradually overhauled the row-boat, and wind was telling over muscle.

"Ahoy that boat!" cried the one in the sail-boat as he drew within easy hail.

But no response came, and still the boat sped on.

"Come to or I will fire on you!" came the threatening cry.

But the north shore of East river was not far distant, and the fugitive seemed determined to press on to it.

Nearer and nearer drew the sail-boat, but it began to look as though the fugitive would escape, as the sea rolling astern showed that the water was getting shallow.

"He will escape me if I do not fire!" and with this remark the former called out sternly:

"Rest on your oars, or I fire!"

Still the boat sped on, and then came the crack of a pistol, a cry of pain, and the oars dropped from the rower's hands.

"Great God! that was no man's voice," cried the pursuer anxiously, and the next moment he luffed sharp and ran alongside of the skiff, just as he began to feel that a few lengths nearer shore would have gotten him aground.

"Who are you?" he asked of the occupant of the boat, who sat upright, his right hand upon his left shoulder.

"I am only a boy."

"I am sorry that I fired upon you; but are you badly hurt?"

"No, it is only a flesh-wound, I think."

"You should have stopped when I ordered you to do so."

"What right had you to order me?"

"I am an officer of the navy, and your rowing made you appear suspicious, so I gave chase; but come, get into my boat, and I will take care of you as soon as I get to the city, for now I am in great haste."

"Come, do not delay me longer!"

The boy obeyed, springing lightly into the sail-boat, while he held the painter of his skiff.

"Do you live near here?"

"No, sir."

"Where do you live?"

"In the city."

"Then cast off your skiff, for it will only delay me, to take it in tow, and I will pay you for it."

"Now, every moment is precious."

The boy obeyed, and the sail-boat was put away on her course once more.

"Why are you out here alone?" asked the captor of the boy.

"I will not tell you, sir."

"Very well; but I am afraid you were up to some mischief— Ah! there comes a vessel!"

Both now gazed upon the approaching sail, and soon the boy called out somewhat anxiously:

"It is the war-schooner Vidette, sir."

"Yes, I discovered that just as you spoke."

"Do you know her?"

"I've been on board of her, sir."

"I will hail her, for I was on my way to the city to go on board of her."

"Oh, sir, please let me go on shore," cried the boy, in an earnest tone.

"No, I will see just who you are, and find out what you were doing out here at night, and alone, for I have seen other suspicious work going on that I do not like," and running across the bows of the schooner, soon after he hailed:

"Ho, the Vidette!"

"Hold there at that gun! ay, ay, who are you?" was the response, showing that the schooner's commander was just about to fire at the sail-boat when hailed.

"Duncan Dare!" rung out the answer, and quickly came the response:

"Luff sharp, Dare, and I'll run up to you."

"Bravo for you! for of all men I wished to see you, for there has been wicked work played this night."

A moment after and the schooner, with fluttering sails moved slowly up to the sail-boat, and the two occupants sprung on board.

"Put a couple of men, please, into my boat, Captain Beverly, and let them run her down to the city, for she is a good craft, and is well cargoesd with fruits and vegetables sent you by my mother."

"Then press on with the schooner, for the Spitfire is ahead of you some three leagues."

"Ha! that is what I am after, and I welcome you on board."

"Two of you men, and one who knows Hell Gate, get into that boat and run her to the city."

"Now, Dare, come into the cabin and tell me what you know; but who have you here?"

"A boy I captured, sir, after a hot chase, and he is wounded, poor fellow, for I had to fire on him to make him come to."

"I am Redfern, Captain Beverly," the boy said quietly, as he followed the two into the cabin.

"Ah! it is you, you young traitor?"

"Were you a few years older I'd string you up to the yard-arm for this night's work!" cried Burton Beverly angrily, and he turned his flashing eyes upon the pale, but handsome face of the boy.

"He does not look like one who would do an evil act, sir," said Duncan Dare.

"No, he does not look it, but he belies his looks; but come, boy, you are wounded, and you shall not suffer, for I will have the surgeon see you, and then you can tell me what your treachery meant— Ha! he has fainted," and, as Captain Beverly spoke Redfern sunk upon the floor in a swoon from loss of blood, for his wound had been steadily bleeding.

Instantly the kind-hearted young officer called for the schooner's surgeon, and leaving the boy in his hands turned to Midshipman Dare, and said:

"Now, Duncan, tell me to what happy circumstance I owe meeting you here just at the right time?"

CHAPTER XX.

A SURPRISE.

IN answer to the question of Captain Beverly the handsome young midshipman replied:

"I felt anxious, sir, regarding my little schooner, and wished to see that she wanted for nothing, so I determined to shorten my leave,

much as I enjoyed my visit home, so bought a Sag Harbor boat and started alone."

"I loaded her with good things my mother gave me to share equally with you, and we'll have a perfect Christmas time in eating them."

"I left yesterday morning, and feeling the need of rest, ran into a cove some miles down the Sound to rest for the night."

"I had just dropped anchor, and lowered sail, in a small creek, when I saw a boat sailing into the cove, and in it were three persons."

"They did not land, as I expected they would, but luffed sharp, threw their anchor overboard and calmly waited."

"What they were waiting for, or who they were I could not tell; but before very long I saw a vessel coming toward the cave."

"To my surprise I recognized the Spitfire, and then I wondered what it all meant."

"Into the cove she ran, dropped anchor, and then came a hail from the shore and I heard the name Firefly given, after which the boat ran out to the schooner."

"I was amazed, for it looked to me as though the schooner had been captured by the pirates, and I congratulated myself that I had not hailed, as I felt inclined to do."

"Determined to know what was going on on board, for the schooner still remained at anchor, I threw off my clothes and swam out to her, for she was but a cable's length away."

"I at once discovered that something important was going on, and no one seemed to be on the watch, so I got into the boat alongside and gazed in through the last starboard port."

"Then I had a shock, Captain Beverly, for who do you think I saw on the deck?"

"I half suspect it."

"Who?"

"Captain Carl?"

"Yes."

"By Jove! but that fellow is remarkable for his escapes."

"It was he then that cut the schooner out."

"No, sir, it was Firefly the Smuggler, who did that, as you will understand when I tell you what I heard," and Duncan Dare went on to relate the conversation he heard on deck.

"This is astounding, Dare."

"Yes, sir, and then followed the fight."

"And such a fight! I would not have missed it for a fortune."

"At first I feared Firefly would kill Carl, and thus cheat the gallows of its prey; but soon the pirate warmed to his work, and I never saw such exquisite swordsmanship in my life, and I only hope I can some day equal his skill."

"Yes, when in the navy he was famous as a swordsman; but tell me all, for I am most deeply interested."

"Well, sir, at last Captain Carl drove the smuggler back against the bulwark, within a few feet of me, and soon after struck down his guard and killed him, thrusting his sword clean through his body."

"And Carl escaped, of course?"

"Yes, sir."

"Satan certainly protects his pet. But what then?"

"Captain Carl claimed the command of the schooner, and then I slid down into the water and swam back to my boat."

"Soon after I saw the schooner get under way and run out of the cove, and I assure you I lost no time in following her example, determined to reach you with all haste and make my report."

"On the way I sighted the row-boat and captured the boy, and so my story ends."

"You have done nobly, my dear Dare, as you always do, and I am glad that your pluck enabled us to know just who it is that we are to fight."

"But do you know his course now will doubtless be to the Chesapeake, and that lovely girl will be made his captive once more, if we do not prevent it?"

"He will not allow Miss Kate Kenyon to escape him, sir, if in his power to kidnap her; but how was it the schooner was taken, for her anchorage seemed most secure?"

"Ah, yes, but it was the work of that handsome boy you captured; for he came to me with word that he knew the retreat of Firefly, the Smuggler, his men, his vessels, and where his booty was hidden."

"So I planned with the treacherous youngster, and started off with the Spitfire, leaving her anchored in the Harlem river, while I ran up-stream with my boats to make the attack."

"We had gone but a league when we heard firing astern, the boy leaped into the river and escaped in the darkness, and returning, I found

the schooner gone, and so knew how I had been cleverly trapped.

"With all speed I returned down East river, threw my crew on board the Vidette, and started in chase of the Spitfire, half-believing that Captain Carl was not dead, and that he had retaken her, for the act is just such a bold one as he would be guilty of— Well, Surgeon Hastings, what is it?" and Burton Beverly turned to the surgeon, who just then approached.

"I have dressed the prisoner's wound, sir."

"Well, he had better be placed under guard, for he's a daring fellow."

"Is the wound dangerous, Surgeon Hastings?" asked Duncan Dare.

"No, sir, but it bled freely, and faintness from the blood-letting caused the swoon."

"Well, I will have him placed under guard."

"I have made a discovery, Captain Beverly."

"Well, sir?"

"I wish to say it is not a boy."

"What can you mean, Hastings?"

"The prisoner, sir, is a young girl; but she begged me to keep her secret."

"Still I felt it my duty to tell you, as I knew you did not care to put a girl in irons or have her tried."

"By no means; but you astound me."

"I was astounded myself, sir, but girl she is, and a lovely one too."

"Who is she?"

"She will not make known who she is, sir."

"Well, this is indeed a surprise, but as no one knows, except we three, that it was the supposed boy who betrayed us, that you captured, Dare, I wish the secret kept, and I will set her free as soon as we return to New York."

"I am glad to hear you say that, sir, but it pains me deeply to have fired upon a woman," said Duncan Dare with deep feeling.

"You are generous, Captain Beverly, and I too am glad to hear you say you will set the poor girl free."

"Tell her what I have said, Hastings, and let her feel at rest; but she must keep to her state-room and not be seen."

"I will see to that, Captain Beverly," and the surgeon returned to the state-room, while Burton Beverly and the middy looked at each other in perfect surprise, until a call from the deck took them there in haste.

CHAPTER XXI.

REDFERN TRACKED.

THE call that had taken Captain Beverly and the midshipman on deck was the sweeping up of a dense fog that shut out every obstacle from sight.

"It looks as if it were going to hold in, and we had better put back slowly, feeling our way with the lead, and try and head the pirates off by running out to sea through New York bay," said Burton Beverly.

"I was going to say, sir, that as Captain Carl evidently means mischief in the Chesapeake, would it not be well for you to return to New York, land this girl, enlarge your crew and sail at once to the vicinity of Castle Kenyon Plantation and lay in wait for the Spitfire, while I will get to sea as soon as I can and will hunt up the pirate and follow in his wake."

"Ever right, my lad, you are, and I will follow the suggestion, for this pirate must be taken at all odds, and next time there will be no escape for him," and Burton Beverly gave orders to shorten sail and put the schooner back for the harbor.

The fog lifted a little now and then, and the Vidette dropped anchor just before dawn.

Instantly a boat was lowered, and, enveloped in a cloak, and accompanied by Surgeon Hastings, Redfern was taken ashore.

With a sailor's jacket over his uniform, Duncan Dare also went ashore in the boat, landed and started up one of the streets, while the surgeon looked after the smuggler's daughter.

"You will not allow me to go after a carriage for you, miss?" he said.

"No, thank you."

"But you are hardly able to walk."

"Yes, I can walk very well."

"You will certainly allow me to accompany and aid you?"

"No, I thank you, sir."

"Would you go alone?"

"I prefer to."

"It is dangerous at this hour of early morn."

"I have no fear."

"You are a strange girl."

"And you are a good man, and I thank you over and over again for your goodness to me, and I hope you will tell Captain Beverly I appreciate his kindness after my treachery to him."

"Now I bid you good-by."

"Must it be good-by?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will we not meet again?"

"Why should you, a gentleman and an officer, wish to meet me whose actions have confessed her an outlaw and who has been playing the part of a boy in male attire?"

And the young girl spoke bitterly.

"Still I do wish to meet you again, and, though I will not intrude myself upon you, my name is Hugh Hastings, my vessel is the Vidette, and, should you ever need a friend, come to me as you would to a brother."

"I thank you, sir, and I will do as you ask, should I ever need your aid, for I know it is offered in good faith."

"Now, farewell, and may Heaven reward you for your kindness to me."

She grasped his hand and then glided away, disappearing in the gloom of the early morn.

As she went up the street, a form stepped out from the shelter of a doorway and followed her.

It was Duncan Dare, and he stealthily followed her footsteps until he saw her enter a tavern near Fulton street.

After awhile he too entered, but the girl was nowhere visible in the tap-room.

Calling for a drink of liquor, which, however, he never touched, he asked the half-asleep landlord:

"Did not a young sailor enter your tavern a few minutes ago?"

"No!" bluntly said the landlord, eying the questioner closely.

"I was mistaken, then," and Duncan Dare arose and departed.

But he knew that he was not mistaken, and going outside, he saw a light in one of the windows.

"There was no light in the house when she entered, except in the tap-room, and that is her room."

"Ah! I recognize her now, as the wind blows the curtain back; there! she puts down the sash; but it is she, and she stops there, and that crabbled landlord knows who she is, I am confident, and I will know too, for though I would not see her harmed, I believe I can make some valuable discoveries by following in her wake, and I will do it."

"Now, to go on board my little schooner, and hasten the men with their work, for I must be at sea in a couple of days at furthest."

Retracing his way to the river, the midshipman sprung into a harbor boat, and bade the oarsman row him to the Government shipyard.

The men had not yet gone to work; but he boarded a small and beautiful schooner, and quickly aroused all to busy action.

"This craft must be ready to sail within two days, Mr. Manly," he said to the middy in charge.

"I wish you to get the stores on board; have the men come aboard also, and see that every spar and sail needed is ready, for she must sail at the earliest moment possible."

Having set his officers and crew to work, and seen that all would go well, and with dispatch, Duncan Dare took his breakfast aboard the schooner, and then sprung into a boat, to be taken back to the New York side.

As he was crossing the river the Vidette came along like a race-horse, with a large spread of sail, and her course lay toward the sea.

"Success to you, Captain Beverly, and I will follow as soon as I can," shouted the middy.

"Ay, ay, my lad, and good fortune attend you," called back Captain Beverly, as the Vidette swept on.

Upon landing, Duncan Dare went again to the tavern, which he had seen Redfern enter, determined to find out who she was, if he had to arrest the landlord, and force the secret from him through fear.

But, as he approached he suddenly recognized the boyish form come out and walk rapidly away.

The girl's left arm was worn in a sling, and she walked like one fatigued, and the good-hearted middy felt sorry that he had wounded her, and said softly:

"Poor girl."

Going to the river Fern took a boat, and ordered the boatman to row her up the river.

Following her, Duncan Dare did the same.

After a short pull the boat landed not very far from the old mansion, which was the abode of Marks, and springing ashore Fern entered the rickety looking structure.

The midshipman then landed, and as he approached the old place, he saw a vehicle dash up, the horses covered with foam and dust,

showing that they had come from far and had been driven hard.

Out of the vehicle sprang a stooping form, a cloak about his shoulders.

"Ha! it's the same man I saw early last night on the deck of the Spitfire, and who appeared to be second to each of the outlaw chiefs in their duel."

"Now I will find out where he is, and just why that girl has come to this place, which has the look of a lawless den to me," and the middy boldly entered the house to be suddenly confronted by Jenks, the clerk, who turned pale as he saw his uniform.

CHAPTER XXII.

REDFERN AND MARKS.

JENKS did not exactly understand what to do, when he beheld an officer enter the old establishment, where so much rascality was transacted.

It never before had been honored by an official visitor, and he was nonplused.

But Duncan Dare gave him no time to consider, as he said quickly:

"I have been told I could get articles here that cannot be purchased elsewhere, and, as I am fitting out a vessel for sea, I wish to get certain things which you may have."

Jenks breathed more freely, and said at once:

"Yes, sir, yes, sir, anything in our line you can buy at low prices."

"What would you like to see?"

"Oh, a hundred things I could almost say."

"Have you a store-room I could overlook?"

"Yes, sir," and Jenks led the way into a long room filled with almost every conceivable object.

"There, sir, look over these things, and call me if I am needed, for I will be in the front office," and Jenks disappeared.

In an instant did the middy get his locality placed, and he walked quickly to the rear of the long room.

He had noted the shape of that wing of the house, and had seen Redfern enter a hallway that seemed to go its length, and at the end was a door which he had doubtless entered.

He reached the end of the wareroom, and distinctly heard voices.

There was an office beyond, and there the speakers certainly were.

The plastering had fallen from the walls in places, and in one spot daylight gleamed through into the wareroom, for it was darker than the other.

Springing lightly upon a box he peered through, and his eyes fell upon Marks at his desk, while a sailor stood near, evidently waiting for something the miser was writing.

Near the door sat Redfern, waiting for the leisure of Marks.

Leaping down from the box the youth retraced his way to the front office and saw Jenks:

"My dear sir, you have a number of things here that I need, so, with your kind permission I will take my time in looking over them, and note down on paper just what I wish."

"When I get through I will, point all out to you."

"Certainly, sir, certainly, and I will give you more light in the room."

"Oh, no, for I can see well enough," and Duncan Dare returned to the wareroom and leaped up to the top of the box.

The man was just taking from Marks's hand a written document of some kind, and then he departed, while Redfern quickly stepped forward.

"Well, boy, I have had a chase after you," said Marks.

"And I have come to see you, Mr. Marks, to learn how the schooner got out and all about it," was the reply.

"Oh, she got out all right, my lad, only she has a different commander from what was expected."

"I do not understand."

"Here is a letter your father gave me for you," and the letter was handed over.

"The seal has been broken," quickly said Redfern.

"Yes, I did it."

"When it was intrusted to your care?"

"Yes, for I never carry a letter, the contents of which I do not know."

"It is just what I might expect of you, Mr. Marks."

"Yes."

"As you know its contents I will read it aloud, and ask you to explain anything I do not understand."

"As you please."

Then Redfern read the letter aloud, and, com-

ing to what his father had said regarding his duel with Captain Carl, cried quickly:

"Did my father slay Captain Carl?"

"Read the letter through and then I will tell you all you would know," was the cold reply.

Redfern continued reading, and said, when the letter was finished:

"Now tell me!"

"I wish to ask a few questions first?"

"Go on."

"You are the heir to the Haunted Inn upon the right bank of the river, above here?"

"I am, for it was my grandparents' home."

"Will you sell it?"

"No."

"I will pay you well for it."

"I will not part with it."

"Give me proofs that you own it, or are heir, and a quit claim to it, and I will pay you twenty thousand dollars for the estate."

"You are not rich enough to buy it, sir."

"I am very rich."

"Doubtless, but you have not the command of enough gold to buy that old home."

"We shall use, for you will have to part with it; but now tell me how much your father left you?"

"The sum you gave him, or rather advanced him, with which to buy the schooner and equip her."

"Where is this money?"

"Safe."

"It is mine."

"You are mistaken, for it is mine."

"I will have you arrested as one who aided in the stealing of the schooner Firefly, if you do not do as I wish."

Redfern laughed, and replied:

"Mr. Marks, misfortune and sorrow made my father drift into outlawry; and in you he found one ready to dispose of his smuggled booty."

"I accidentally learned the life he was leading, and I joined him, to wean him from it."

"Had not Midshipman Dare attacked his retreat of the Hawks of the Hook, my father would have been far from here now, leading an honest life, for he had laid away a snug sum that was captured."

"He asked me to aid him to get back for his men what they had lost, and I did what I could to help him capture the schooner."

"Now you can have me arrested, and if I go to jail, you go to the gallows, so send for a constable and carry out your threat if you dare."

"Lad, I was just trying you, to see your pluck, and you have plenty of it."

"I like you, and I always liked your father, and I wish to serve you, so give into my hands the money you have, and I will invest it for you so that it will bring in treble its present amount."

"No, sir, I will keep it myself, so do not delay me longer in useless talk, but tell me about my father."

"He is dead!"

A cry broke from Redfern's lips, and he staggered back to a seat and dropped into it."

A moment she sat the picture of silent despair, and then she sprung to her feet with:

"It is false! for my father was too skillful with a sword to be slain in a personal combat."

"He simply met one who was more skillful."

"Oh! curses on that man's head!"

"But his day of reckoning shall come!"

"My poor, poor father! to be slain as he was."

"And you stood by and saw this deed done?" she cried fiercely, turning upon Marks.

"Yes, I saw the deed."

"By Heaven! man, I believe you urged it on to get rid of my father, so that Captain Carl, your great friend, might have his vessel and crew."

"On the contrary, I wished to get rid of Captain Carl, for he stands in my way, in a certain love affair, and I arranged the meeting to have your father kill him, knowing Captain Firefly's skill as a swordsman."

"Would to God it had happened otherwise, and that my poor father had lived, for I am now alone in the world."

"What does a boy, such as you are, care for that?"

"I care more than you think."

"Well, your father is dead, boy, and that ends it."

"If you wish me to be your friend, I will, or if you wish to go to sea as an officer on a craft without a legitimate flag, I can arrange it for you."

"I am no outlaw, Mr. Marks, and I have an honest heart."

"Circumstances made me herd with evil men, such as you, but I have done no wrong, other

than to aid my father to capture the schooner, and I will not be dragged down to your level in crime."

"From to-day your path is not the one I follow, and I lead a different life; but I am revengeful, and Captain Carl shall feel that I can strike at the slayer of my father."

"I have offered to barter with you, boy, and it has done no good; so now I shall use force, as you are wholly in my power," and Marks arose from his chair.

Leaping from the box, where he had seen and heard all, Duncan Dare sped like a flash of lightning along the wareroom, out of the door and into the hallway, his light step not reaching the ears of Jenks who was in the front office.

As he reached the door of Marks's office, he heard a stifled cry within, and throwing it open, beheld the man with the supposed boy in his arms, and struggling hard, bearing him toward an inner room.

In an instant he was upon Marks, sword in hand, and his stern command to halt was the first intimation of his presence.

"Hold! Release that boy, or I'll pin you on my sword!" he cried.

A startled cry broke from the lips of Marks, and Redfern slipped from his powerful grasp and sprung to the side of the midshipman.

Seeing an officer, Marks turned deadly pale, and said:

"It is my son, sir, and I was about to lock him up for his misdeeds."

"You lie, Marks! He is not your son."

"I came here to make some purchases, and sought your office, when I heard that boy's cry for help, so I came to the rescue."

"Come, my lad—come with me, and as soon as I have paid this man's clerk for some purchases I am forced to get of him, they not to be had elsewhere, I will see you in safety to where you would go."

"Oh, I thank you, Midshipman Dare!" cried Redfern.

Marks started and said, in a voice that quivered:

"Are you Duncan Dare?"

"I am, sir."

"I have heard of you, sir, as a most gallant officer, and have been most anxious to meet you, sir."

"Well, we have met, and you are worsted; but if you attempt to harm this boy we will meet again, and it will be a most unpleasant meeting for you, Marks."

"Come, my lad," and the middy left the office with Redfern, while Marks stood like a statue, seemingly deeply moved, for he was pallid and quivering.

At the outer office Jenks was met, and he was astounded to see the middy and Redfern coming out of the hallway, for no one ever was allowed to go to his master's room unarmed.

"Did you see the merchant, sir?" he asked, in a tremor.

"Yes, and I will show you the things I need," and entering the wareroom they were quickly picked out.

"How much?"

Jenks gave him the sum total.

"Here is your money, and I wish you to lead them in a boat and send them to the Government ship-yard for the schooner-of-war Ocean Firefly."

"Ocean Firefly?" gasped Jenks.

"Ocean Firefly?" cried Redfern.

"Yes, that is the name I have given my vessel," and Duncan Dare turned away with Redfern.

"Here I must leave you, sir, and for all your kindness I can only thank you," said the young girl, the tears in her eyes.

"Promise me, when you have found a home, you will let me know, for I have a greater knowledge of you than you suppose, as I was in the wareroom, and heard all that passed between you and that villain Marks, and I know my mother would be most happy to give you a home with her, while no one, other than she, shall know of your past life, or its secrets."

The tears came into the beautiful eyes of Redfern, and she grasped the hand of the middy, while she said:

"Oh, how I thank you," but now I will go to my desolate home up on the river, and when I have thought it all over I will seek you, tell you all, and ask your advice as I would a brother, for you alone know me as I am, sir."

"Now, good-by."

She turned quickly away, and after seeing her enter a light skiff, which she hired from a boatman, who raised the sail for her, as her arm was still crippled, Duncan Dare started back from the river.

He had not gone far when he looked and beheld Marks and Jenks, and the former was pointing to the skiff in which was Redfern, now far up the river.

Instantly Duncan Dare sought a hiding place, and from it saw Jenks go off and get a boat and take it to the water steps near Marks's home.

Then a large bundle was brought from the house by Jenks and placed in the boat, and, just at sunset Marks came out and went to the end of the pier, disappearing from sight.

"He is following the girl, and I have no time to lose."

"Ha! there is a vehicle and he will drive me up the shore to where I can get a boat, and thus head him off, and then woe be unto that evil man, for I know him now as he is, and the gallows shall yet claim him."

So saying the middy hailed the driver of a carriage, and was soon whirling rapidly up the river road.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SECRET OF THE HAUNTED INN.

URGED by a golden fee the driver drove with great speed, and at last drew rein in a small fishing hamlet.

"You can await my return here, my man, for I go across to yonder inn."

"Should I not return, go to the Government ship-yard and report where I went."

"That inn is haunted, sir," said the driver in an awed tone.

"So I have heard, but I have business there."

"Now to get me a boat and a lantern."

From a fisherman these were soon obtained, and the middy was put across the river not far from the Haunted Inn.

"Don't go near there, sir, I beg you," said the fisherman.

"My man, I am sorry I cannot oblige you, for to the inn I go; but I desire that you go up the river and then across, on your return, and say nothing about my movements."

"Here is a gold piece for you, and I'll give you more if you do as I wish."

"Bless you, sir, I will; but I urges you, for your own safety, as ghosts are yonder day and night, for I have heard and seen them."

Duncan Dare laughed, sprung ashore, and saw the fisherman start up the river.

In a little cove near he saw the white skiff which had brought Redfern, and he knew that Marks must arrive soon.

With his lantern shielded by his cloak, he made his way up toward the inn, and as he did so he observed the flash of a light in one of the rooms.

"That girl has nerve to enter that old rookery at night as she does, for I don't like the idea of doing so; but she is there, and has lighted a lamp or candle," he muttered.

In a clump of shrubbery he then took his stand, and soon after saw a form approaching.

It was Marks, and he carried a basket and a bundle.

Halting within a few feet of the youth, he said aloud:

"Curse the place! I never enter it without a shudder, and no wonder when I can never forget the scene here twenty years ago."

"But I dare not trust my secret to others, and he will die if I do not bring him food, and I do not wish that until I force from his lips the secret of the treasure he buried on Long Island, soon after he was wrecked there."

"But that boy's coming here I did not like at first, though now it must be his prison, as I shall confine him in the secret room."

"Now he is in that fatal bed-chamber, for I see his light through the window, so he will not hear me on the way to the stone room, so I will go there first and leave these victuals."

"Ugh! how I hate to cross that threshold; but soon all this secret life will end, and when Kate Kenyon becomes my wife, I will live like a prince, for her inheritance, and what I force from that Firefly boy, and then learn the secret of that buried treasure, I will have riches second to no one."

So saying the man entered the house, and his every word had reached the ears of Duncan Dare.

Quickly the youth slipped off his boots and followed.

Marks was in the hallway, ascending the stairs, lighting his way with a bull's-eye lantern.

Following him, his cloak concealing his light, came the youth, a pistol in his hand, and stepping so lightly that he was not heard.

Up the stairs, along a hall went Marks, turning into a doorway, which he left open, and then crossing a room he pressed hard against a

panel in the wall, the light revealing his every action.

The panel turned and the man entered the narrow space, leaving the youth in darkness.

But Duncan Dare uncovered his lantern, found the panel, pressed it hard as he had seen Marks do, and also entered.

He was in a brick-walled passageway, and, having covered his light, saw a glimmer ahead.

Going forward he came to a door that was closed, and chains and bolts were outside, but they were unfastened.

Within he heard voices, and he shoved the door gently and peered through.

The room was small, as he saw it, with stone walls, windows, and a sky-light in the top through which a current of air came.

A cot, table and chair, with some shelves were visible, and in the latter were books, dishes and other articles.

On the chair sat a man, and his ankles were ironed and a chain attached was secured to a ring in the stone wall.

Beneath the iron shackles the man had placed pieces of blanket, to prevent their cutting into the flesh.

The prisoner was thin, haggard and sad-looking, and his clothes were scant and worn.

Near him stood Marks, and he said:

"Well, brother, I have brought you more provisions for the week, and I have also the hope that you will end this cruel captivity by telling me the secret I so long to know."

"Merton, you should know by this time that I am not to be forced to tell what I have sworn I would never reveal."

"That treasure was captured from a pirate vessel, and when the craft I was in was wrecked I buried it, intending some day to devote it to good uses."

"Some sailors betrayed to you the secret and you come and claimed it as your own, but I would not give it up, and then you threatened."

"I went to sea in my vessel, and you, Rafael, the Rover, though my brother, hunted me down, destroyed my vessel and took me away to a cruel prison life."

"In Baltimore you held me a prisoner, hoping to force from me the secret, and I stood firm for long years."

"Now you have me here, and you hope I will yield, but I never will, for I know you will not kill me."

"Ha! do you believe that, my brother?"

"You are mistaken, for it was I who nearly twenty years ago killed in this very house the girl who discarded me for Tracey Truax, and with her, her parents and the servants."

"They were our kindred, as you know, and yet my hand was not stayed."

"Tracey Truax, as Captain Firefly, went to the bad, and became a smuggler, and I saw him die last night, while his son is now in this house, and, like you, shall live a life of solitary confinement within these walls unless he gives up his gold to me."

"I am no longer Rafael the Rover, brother mine, but a rich merchant, trading in pirate goods, and I live two lives."

"I am Marks the miser merchant in one wing of my house, and in the other I am Merton Regnier, the gentleman of wealth, and it is my intention to marry the daughter of our old boyhood chum, Cyle Kenyon, who is a wealthy planter on the Chesapeake."

"The man who married and deserted our sister?" asked the prisoner.

"Yes; but he believes her living, for I told him she was in an asylum, and so he dares not have me tell the secret of his marrying again to the daughter of his second wife, so will give me the girl."

"Oh, what a wretch you are, Merton Regnier," hissed the prisoner.

"Well, life went different with you, for old Dare adopted you and left you his property, while I was forced to live in poverty, until my wits made me rich."

"I offered you a part of my fortune, left by Mr. Dare to me, if I would take his name."

"Oh, yes, but I wanted all; but now let me tell you that I have no time to waste with you, and to-night, if you do not reveal the secret of that treasure hiding-place, I shall have your life, if not your gold."

"Life to me is little worth now, Merton Regnier, for my wife and child believe me dead, and I will not reveal the secret, as I will not be forced, though for the gold I care nothing."

"Then you shall die!"

"You will kill me?"

"Yes, with this knife," and he drew a long blade from his pocket.

But as he did so, it was struck from his hand,

and Duncan Dare confronted him, his sword in hand.

"Surrender, sir, or you die!"

"Curses! Duncan Dare, you shall die in the presence of your father!" yelled the infuriated man, and he drew a pistol.

But before it was leveled, the blade of the midshipman pierced his heart, and he sunk dead on the stone wall.

Then the boy turned to the prisoner, and cried:

"I have heard all, and know you to be my father, the brother of that vile man!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

OVER what followed between father and son, parted for long years, a veil must be drawn to hide the touching scene.

But, in that stone cell of the Haunted Inn, remained the father and son for several hours, talking over the past, with the dead body of the wicked brother and uncle lying before them.

The chains had been unlocked, with keys found on the body of the pirate, and the prisoner was free, and then the father and son ascended to the floor where Redfern had gone, the freed man walking with difficulty after his long imprisonment, though he had paced his cell daily for hours, to keep up his strength.

A tap at the door brought a startled query from Redfern.

"Who is there?"

"It is Midshipman Dare, and I wish to see you."

"I will open the door in a minute," came the response, and the maiden, her eyes red with weeping soon appeared.

Then she heard from the midshipman's lips all that had occurred, was presented to Mr. Dare, and heard his story, and how her mother was his first cousin, and almost overcome the poor girl would have fallen in a faint, but for the support of Duncan's strong arm.

Together the three talked, and it was decided to bury the body in the cellar, and this was done, Duncan Dare digging a shallow grave.

Then the three left the mansion and went down to the shore, got into the skiff which Duncan had hired, and rowed over to the hamlet, where the driver was found asleep in his carriage.

Arousing him, they entered the vehicle and were driven to an inn, where, after making his father and Redfern comfortable, the midshipman went over to the yard to hasten on the work on his schooner, for he was anxious regarding Kate Kenyon, being at the mercy of Captain Carl.

Though it was night the men were at work, and that day the schooner was ready to sail, and a beautiful craft she was.

Bidding his father and Fern good-by, and asking Mr. Dare to keep quiet and recuperate all he could before going home, leaving his pretty cousin as his nurse, Duncan wrote his mother that he had reason to believe that his father was not dead, but had been a prisoner for long years, but that he would come and tell her all upon his return from a short cruise he was then starting on in his new vessel.

Going aboard he spread sail and headed southward.

As he sailed up the Chesapeake, and came in sight of Castle Kenyon's turrets, the lookout sung out cheerily:

"Sail ho!"

"Ay, ay, there are two vessels, and one is the Vidette, the other the Spitfire."

"Bravo! the pirate is taken, so give three cheers, lads!"

The sails fairly flapped under the yells of the crew, and an hour after the Ocean Firefly ran into the cove of Castle Kenyon, where the Vidette and Spitfire had just dropped anchor.

Going on board the Vidette Duncan Dare met there planter Kenyon, Kate and her twin brother King, who had just returned home.

They had just come on board the Vidette, at the signal of Burton Beverly, and to all he told how he had lain in ambush for the Spitfire, sighted her coming, run out from his hiding-place with the men at the guns and after a fierce fight had captured her by boarding.

"And Captain Carl?" gasped Kate Kenyon.

"Is dead."

"Is it true this time?"

"He lies on his deck dead, for I ran him through the body myself," was the response of the gallant captain.

"Thank God! now I can tell you my secret,"

and Kate Kenyon told of her forced marriage with the pirate.

"And I too have a secret to tell," said Duncan Dare, and he made known to all the career of Marks, and how he had kept his father in durance vile for long years.

To planter Kenyon he told how the pirate had deceived him, and that his first wife was indeed dead; and this secret, the middy said, should be kept between themselves.

Of Redfern, or rather his sweet cousin, Fern Truax, he also told, and leaving the crew to look after the wounded and bury the dead, the little party went up to Castle Kenyon as guests of the planter for a couple of days.

Then the three vessels set sail for New York and arrived in safety, when another meeting was held in the City Hotel, where Mr. Dare and Fern were also of the party.

As Captain Carl had been slain and his schooner retaken, Burton Beverly accepted Duncan Dare's invitation to take a rest for a short while, and the whole party sailed in the Ocean Firefly for the homestead on Long Island, and the welcome they received from the beautiful mother of the daring middy made their hearts glad, as it did hers to receive back, as from the grave, her long-absent husband.

Added to the party were also Squire Hampton and his lovely Jessie, and it is certainly useless for me to add that in good time Kate Kenyon became the wife of Captain Beverly, and Fern's heart was won by Doctor Hastings, surgeon of the Vidette, while, upon reaching his twenty-first year, Duncan Dare married the sweetheart of his schoolboy days, to whom he had been true through all, sweet Jessie Hampton.

Gaining her inheritance, Fern Truax became most wealthy in the possession of the Haunted Inn estate, for she was glad to sell it, all but the little graveyard on the hillside, and with its disposal was lost the strange secret that had clung to it in the past.

Jenks received a visit from Duncan Dare, who intimated that he could either be hanged or reveal what he knew of Marks, and the double life of that man was made known in full, and his clerk was glad to escape to a foreign land with the gold he had put aside for himself, while Mr. Dare, as the brother of Merton Regnier, came in possession of the property, and at once turned it over to be used in charity.

The buried treasure he never found, for he had lost all trace of its hiding-place, and so allowed it to remain without a search, for, as he said, he had enough of this world's goods, and the treasure was stained with blood.

Thus ends my story of Captain Carl the Corsair, and Duncan Dare the gallant middy, who for long years became known as the Ocean Firefly.

THE END.

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